FRANCE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

W. L. GEORGE

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BY

W. L. GEORGE

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PREFACE

IN the first chapter of this book, the author states at length the difficulties with which the would-be writer on France is confronted. After perusing them, the reader will be inclined to think that neither the able nor the sincere can ever hope to fulfil these impossible conditions, and it is true that they are difficult of realisation. The author has developed his views sufficiently to make it unnecessary to state it here, but the salient fact that emerges is that neither the Frenchman nor the alien is ideally fitted for a study of France, owing to his natural bias; the obvious inference is that the most favourable position is that of a *heimatlos*, whose tendencies are half French and half British, who is born and educated under one flag and counter-influenced under the other. Thus he becomes a neutral and able to take up a sane position.

As this is not an autobiography, the author will only state briefly the circumstances that induce him to believe that he is in a position to judge fairly; no credit is claimed for fortuitous advantages, but he may be allowed to avail himself of them all the same. He ventures to think himself capable of stating fairly the point of view of the French because he was born in

their country, educated in their capital up to and including university courses, and was even compelled by the law to serve a term in the French army. By training and by environment, therefore, the French attitude of mind was forced upon him at the same time as he obtained a knowledge of French institutions.

A corrective was however necessary if he was to view France with the eye of an impartial and not a French observer. This was supplied by the fact of his being of English stock and of having benefited by continual association with men and women of his own race while still resident in France. Moreover, after completing his military service, he has passed in Great Britain the five years immediately preceding the publication of this book, so that he has been enabled to refresh the original British influence and to relieve the overwhelming weight of his early training.

It need only be added that these five years have not entirely divorced the author from the land of his birth; he retained contact with it and its language by the practice of journalism and by following closely the march of political events in France. Thus he happens to be in a privileged position, and is willing to forgo any toleration which is accorded as a rule to him who treats of a foreign country.

The collection of the information contained in this book has been laborious, and would have been impossible but for the co-operation of individuals who were in possession of special knowledge. The author wishes, therefore, to tender his most sincere

thanks to Dr. Etienne May; Mr. Gaston Lacoin, barrister; M. Raymond Lauzerte, of the *Théâtre Réjane;* M. Maurice Kahn, editor of *Pages Libres;* and to the editor of *Le Temps.*

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1774.	May 10.	Accession of Louis XVI.
1776.	July 4.	American Declaration of Independence.
1787.	Feb. 22.	Convocation of Notables.
	May 25.	Dismissal of Notables.
	Aug. 6.	King holds a *Lit de Justice*[1] to force the *Parlement* to register the edicts of Loménie de Brienne.
	Aug. 15.	Exile of the *Parlement* to Troyes.
1788.		Conflict between King and *Parlement* continues.
	Aug. 8.	Convocation of States-General for May, 1789.
1789.	June 17.	The Third Estate constitutes itself into a "National Assembly."
	July 14.	Fall of *La Bastille.*
	Aug. 4.	All class privileges abandoned.
	Aug. 20.	Declaration of the Rights of Man.
1790.	June.	Titles of nobility abolished.
1791.	June 21.	Flight of Louis XVI and the Royal Family.
	Oct. 1.	Legislative Assembly meets.
1792.	Aug. 10.	Sack of the *Tuileries.*
	Sept. 21.	Abolition of the Monarchy.
1793.	Jan. 21.	Execution of Louis XVI.
	Oct. 16.	Execution of Marie-Antoinette.
1794.	July 27.	Fall of Robespierre.
1795.	Nov. 1.	Formation of the *Directoire.*
1799.	Dec. 13.	Bonaparte becomes First Consul.

[1] Special sitting.

1802.	Aug.	2.	Bonaparte becomes First Consul for life.
1804.	May	18.	The First Empire.
1815.	July	6.	Final accession of Louis XVIII.
1824.	Sept.	16.	Accession of Charles X.
1830.	July.		Abdication of Charles X.
			Accession of Louis-Philippe.
1848.	Feb.	24.	Abdication of Louis-Philippe.
			The Second Republic
	Dec.	10.	Louis-Napoléon President.
1851.	Dec.	2.	The *Coup d'Etat.*
			Louis-Napoléon President for life.
1852.	Dec.	2.	Napoléon III Emperor.
1860.			Commercial treaty with Great Britain.
1862.			Mexico expedition.
1870–1.			War with Prussia.
1870.	Sept.	4.	Fall of the Empire.
			The Third Republic.
1871.	March	18.	*La Commune;* civil war.
	May	10.	Peace.
	Aug.	31.	M. Thiers President of the Republic.
1873.	May	24.	Marshal MacMahon President of the Republic (vice M. Thiers resigned).
1879.			M. Grévy President of the Republic (vice Marshal MacMahon resigned).
1884.			Revision of the Constitution.
1885.	Dec.	28.	Re-election of M. Grévy.
1886.			Expulsion of members of families which had reigned in France.
1887.	Dec.	3.	M. Carnot President of the Republic (vice M. Grévy resigned).
1889.	Jan.–April.		The Boulanger agitation.
1892.			Panama scandals.
1894.			Murder of M. Carnot.
	June	27.	M. Casimir-Périer President of the Republic.

Chronological Table

1895.			Captain Dreyfus tried and sentenced.
	Jan.	17.	M. Félix Faure President of the Republic (vice M. Casimir-Périer resigned).
1896.	October.		Visit of the Tsar.
1897.	August.		The President visits St. Petersburg.
1898.			Scheurer Kestner and Zola begin the Dreyfus agitation.
	Jan.	7.	*Le Siècle* publishes the text of the indictment of Captain Dreyfus.
	Jan.	13.	Zola indicts the General Staff in *l'Aurore.*
	Aug.	30.	Suicide of Colonel Henry.
	Dec.	11.	Marchand evacuates Fashoda.
1899.	Feb.	18.	M. Loubet President of the Republic (M. Félix Faure died suddenly after being in office four years).
	June	3.	New trial of Captain Dreyfus ordered.
	July	13.	Confession of Esterhazy.
	Aug.	12.	Arrest of M. Déroulède and others on a charge of high treason.
	Aug.	20.	Anarchist riots in Paris.
	Sept.	20.	Captain Dreyfus pardoned.
	Nov.	18.	M. Déroulède and others sentenced
1901.			Law passed regulating the formation of religious orders.
1903.	May	1.	The King visits Paris officially.
	July	7.	M. Loubet at the Guildhall.
	July	22.	French Senators and Deputies received by the House of Commons.
	Oct.	14.	Anglo-French Arbitration Treaty.
1904.	March	28.	Bill for the suppression of teaching in conventual and monastic institutions passed.
	April	8.	The "Entente Cordiale."
	Dec.	22.	The North Sea incident. Inquiry commission meets in Paris.

1905.	June.		Morocco. War scare with Germany. Resignation of M. Delcassé.
	Oct.	16.	The *Conseil Municipal* of Paris visits the London County Council.
	Dec.	6.	Separation of the Church from the State. Repeal of the *Concordat.*
1906.	Jan.	17.	M. Fallières President of the Republic.
	Feb.	7.	The London County Council visits the *Conseil Municipal* of Paris.
	March	10.	"Courrières" colliery disaster. Labour agitation.
	July.		Franco-British Exhibition decided.
	Dec.	6.	The Separation of Church and State Bill comes into force.
1907.	January.		Bill passed allowing of the conduct of Church worship under Common Law.
	July.		Papal Encyclical on "Modernism" enunciating the tenets that must be accepted by the faithful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

IT is a noteworthy fact that we do not, as a rule, take an interest in that which lies at our doors. The ignorance of Londoners of the beauties of their own city is proverbial and as remarkable as the avidity with which they approach foreign travel; any book dealing with strange lands is still assured of a ready sale, provided that it be at all readable and not over-bulky. Thus, of late years, we have seen an ever-increasing mass of literature produced by legions of globe-trotters, every one striving to bring out the quaint and the picturesque.

The quaint and the picturesque: that formula sums up nine-tenths of the pseudo-geographical or pseudo-economic works of the last decade; we know a little about Japan and a good deal about South Africa: whether what we do know is right or wrong I leave to the Japanese and to the Afrikander to decide. I do

not wish to contend seriously that we should limit our curiosity to the beaten track and neglect any country that does not lie within the scope of Cook's tours—if there be such a one; it must, however, be remembered that, vital as our interests may be in the furthest corners of the globe, it is with our neighbours that we are most likely to differ; it is in their friendship that we can hope to find the strongest support of the State. This doctrine may savour of the "parish pump" theory, but there are worse interests in the world than the parish pump.

It may be argued that this is a sweeping indictment, but it can easily be upheld. Nothing is so difficult to describe as a foreign land and a foreign race; the Englishman who lands in India after a course of Rudyard Kipling very soon realises his limitations, and it is not until after a lapse of years that he can hope to depict from personal observation the characteristics of the people among whom he lives. Should he settle in a European country, where the ideals of the people and the methods of government are somewhat similar to those he has left behind him, his difficulties are not less but greater. The more similar the characteristics, the more subtle are the differences and the more difficult it is to fix them; an appropriate simile is the study of languages: any philologist or any linguist will admit that it is far easier to master perfectly—I do not say roughly—German and Spanish than German and Dutch. The study of the two former languages sets in motion two entirely different sets of "mental muscles," whereas the two latter can be acquired by the same method of observation; thus immense difficulties are encountered because differences are innumerable, but yet so slight

as to offer no hold to the memory or to the logical faculty.

The conclusion to be drawn is that few individuals are really fitted to describe a foreign race. If they be members of the nation they wish to depict they are biased, favourably or unfavourably, and in most cases their education and environment prevent them from perceiving those differences which at once arrest the alien eye; if, on the other hand, they be tourists or settlers, the many years that must elapse before they can speak with authority tend to denationalise them, to place them out of touch with their own country. Except in very rare cases, no man should write about any land but that of his birth.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the ideal conditions are difficult of realisation, and I confess that it is not without a tremor that I venture to approach the subject. Having said so much about disabilities, it is not fair to stop at destructive criticism; the ideal situation for the writer who wishes to paint for the British public a true picture of a foreign land is that of a man of British parentage, born and educated abroad and provided during his childhood and youth with a British atmosphere. Thus, while assimilating the characteristics and learning the traditions of his adopted nationality, he does not lose touch with his native race. He becomes a foreigner, but a sympathetic, an understanding foreigner; should he then, in early manhood, return to the land of his ancestors, he naturally reverts to their moral and intellectual type in so far that his individuality is recast, that he understands their aspirations and their methods of thought. His early training has modified him so deeply that he can

never hope to shake off its influence, nor is it desirable that he should do so; he has reached the ideal state of no longer belonging entirely to one race. He has lost his prejudices and gained in understanding because he can no longer take sides; he can see the institutions of the land of his birth with British eyes as well as he can realise the effects produced upon citizens of his native land by British customs and methods.[1]

The Frenchman who settles in any part of Great Britain and particularly in London will, as a rule, very soon acquire an immense and respectful admiration for British institutions and manners; the institutions appeal to him by their broad tolerance, their wide outlook and their elasticity; British manners also achieve an easy conquest because of the hospitality of the people and their free and easy cheerfulness. Thus this country is assured a friendly critic: no man who knows England can avoid loving her, whether he wish to or not. There is, however, one thing that strikes and irritates both the Frenchman and the settler in France: it is the utter and painful ignorance in which we are plunged as regards French customs and institutions. I do not say that things might not be worse; at the present time the British people are sympathetic and interested in things French, and I expect that they are at last giving up the delusions they have hugged so long and no longer believe that Frenchmen are born in flat-brimmed top-hats, nor that they progress through a life sustained by means of frogs, shrugging their shoulders and crying "Mon Dieu!" But the British people seem unable to grasp the most elementary characteristics of the French; they do not understand

[1] See Preface.

the working of their political machine; they are blind to the aspirations of the people and deluded as to the social future of the land. Such a state of things is, I acknowledge it, reciprocal, but none the less for that reason unfortunate and dangerous; were it possible to clear up half the misunderstanding, the rest of the task would be easy.

But why, will it be asked, are the British so profoundly ignorant of the true characteristics of a race with which they have, for a thousand years, been in close contact as enemies or as allies? Above all, how is it that the Norman Conquest and its predecessor, the Roman Invasion, did not level up the two countries, given that the aboriginal British languages have been practically swept away? It is strange, and I would be inclined to ascribe the differences to those climatic conditions which have ever been the scapegoat of the embarrassed ethnographer. But, setting aside the question of natural differences, with which we are not really concerned, we must ask ourselves how it is that these acknowledged dissimilarities are misunderstood whenever perceived. The causes appear to be threefold: they are our insular position, the proximity of France, and the imagination of our authors.

Our insular position has ever been our tower of strength, but the British race paid for it, and paid heavily: its character has tended to become what the French call *tout d'une pièce*, an untranslatable expression, meaning roughly "out-and-out," or better still, "whole-hogger"; the lack of a common frontier has impeded the exchange of ideas: it has left full scope to commerce but it has not favoured friendly relations and intermarriage. It is by these means that continental nations succeed in

approximating within a greater or lesser degree, and it is the frontier cross-breed and the frontiersman in general who serve as connecting links between otherwise alien states. It does not need profound study to realise this; a very short stay in Belgium, Switzerland, or Alsace, or even an acquaintance with emigrants from these countries, at once demonstrates that this is the case; not only does it seem difficult to discover a Swiss or an Alsacian whose German is free from Gallicisms and *vice versâ*, not only is it rare to find a Belgian capable of writing faultless French, but the very physique and intellect of these peoples have been modified. All have some of the Latin graces, strangely mingled with Teutonic stolidity—the shallow brilliance of the Southerner and the steadfast capacity for hard work of the Central European. This has not been the case between Great Britain and France, any more than between Great Britain and any other continental nation, and it is in great part for that reason that the two races have never understood one another and still find an enormous difficulty in doing so.

Yet the differences between France and Great Britain are not striking enough to have attracted to any great extent the attention of authors hunting for likely subjects. Setting aside guide-books and encyclopædias and such-like works that do not aspire to outline the soul of the race, less than two-score volumes have been published during the last twenty-five years dealing on a fairly comprehensive scale with French institutions and customs. This may look like a large number, but it is not so if we consider the time over which these publications are spread, and how out of date some of them necessarily are; moreover, most people have no conception of the

number of books that are necessary before the public can acquire a general idea of any subject. At least four hundred separate works have been published during the last twenty years concerning South Africa and the South African wars, over and above millions of columns in widely-read reviews and newspapers, and what do we know of South Africa? Experiment yields amazing results. If such be our ignorance of our own colony, how much less may we know of a foreign power, allowance being made for proximity? I would point out that the British traveller has only of late years been availing himself of this proximity to any great extent.

France has not attracted much attention: it was too easy, too ordinary for serious treatment; there was nothing distinguished or unusual about the normal characteristics of the race. One could write about French art or describe a tour from Dunkirk to Marseilles, but it was not worth while to delve into the inner being of the French race. Thus British authors neglected France and went far afield, to Mexico and Tibet, and we were allowed to stagnate. And that again is why the British do not understand the French: they have not been told what the latter really are.

Indeed? will the reader say, but is not every other novel full of Paris, "Gay Paris" and the *Plages* of Normandy? True, too true, for here we meet the third and most important of the causes to which we can trace international estrangement: the mendacity of certain authors or their ignorance. Carelessly, they have written of France and things French, quoted and misquoted French sayings, and for what? for the purpose of "spicing" their books by attributing to the Gallic race every trait that makes good "copy," by

turning every character into a type, and then loading it with attributes that Dickens would not have dared to inflict on a Jingle or a Pecksniff. Some have, no doubt, been sincere, and have tried to understand before they wrote, but, borne down by the weight of tradition, hampered by prejudices learned at school, they have been carried away and, losing sight of the true French character, they have devoted themselves to the quest of the quaint and the picturesque. And thus, by this continual straining after the effective, thanks to this extraordinary idea that France is a land where all is odd, the British people have been deluded and their mind has been warped. The "book" Frenchman is not one whit less ludicrous and libellous than the "stage" Frenchman of days gone by, and "book" France is a suitable habitat for this strange being.

The striving after the quaint and the picturesque is in keeping with the tendency of modern sensational literature, with modern literary taste or lack of taste; I know it is not worth while elaborating a lengthy disquisition on the melancholy, if not premature, decease of the ponderous tome written in the Johnsonian manner, and of the sombre thunderings that still occasionally echo from the wutherin' heights of certain reviews; yet this effort is so characteristic, so symbolical, that I cannot refrain from pointing out with what fatal effects it has reached France and matters French. We must allow for imagination and I do not doubt that the headlong impressionism with which the novelist garnishes the literary feast is as sincere as it is misguided; a comic giant of French literature, of the Falstaff or Don Quixote type, Tartarin de Tarascon, was somewhat given to pantagruelian exaggeration and, if I remember

right, his imagination one day turned the accidental shooting of a tethered cow into an encounter with raging lions; this the author naively explains: "Of course, gentlemen, it was not true; it was a mirage, merely a mirage." I am afraid that the average British author has been, like Doctor Syntax, in search of the picturesque and that the wide plains and little old towns of France have usually provoked in him a severe attack of Tartarin's malady.

There seems to be a constitutional impossibility to get a true picture from the average British author: Sterne was the first and worst offender because he was a humorist. It is so difficult to be a humorist and an honest man in this dull world of ours; true, there is humour for those that have eyes to see it, and thus a man may be a humorist and yet be honest, even though honesty make not the best humour. The worst danger of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* lay in the fact that it was so good; his matchless style and attar-of-roses elegance carried with them a charm so much greater than the crudities of truth that even the seeker after that elusive quality lost his way and finally his discrimination. Sterne led and others followed, penetrated by his tradition, timidly attempting his manner, even to this day; characteristic beggars, courteous as cavaliers, black-eyed ladies perpetually in distress and perpetually succoured in the nick of time by noblemen with the best of dancing-school manners, ladies' maids, crafty, tyrannical, and mischievous, became the recognised type of France and the French. As time went on and tastes changed, another offender appeared on the scene and that was a greater man than Sterne, a man whose British men and women must

have been true as we meet them every day—I mean Thackeray. *The Paris Sketch Book*, *Barry Lyndon* and the adventures of Mr. Deuceace again set up the old tradition of lightness and empty frivolity and gave it a new lease of life; the types had changed but the noblemen were still there, a little grimmer and not so prone to presenting ostlers with purses of louis or napoleons, as the case might be; and the ladies still had terrible adventures; and the beggars still struck attitudes. New types had come in, new puppets had been dressed: the *rapin*, inimitable word next which even "bohemian" is a pallid sound, had come in. He had come with his slippers and his velvet coat, his pipe and his long hair, his *grisette* and his adjectives. He has never left us for good; he still lives in the *Quartier Latin*, thanks to the lurid imagination of British and American art students. As a sometime wearer of the *béret*[1] of purple velvet, I venture to express my incredulity in his existence. But what matter such things to a writer on copy bent? Mr. du Maurier followed in magnificent style and to him we owe the crowning jewel of modern insular prejudice. Mr. du Maurier's defects were those of Sterne: he was so dangerously seductive; who will forget Dodor, the ducal *cuirassier*, and Zouzou, the dashing knickerbocker warrior, and Bonzig, the fantastic usher? I do not say that such types do not exist, any more than I feel ready to deny Micawber or Sherlock Holmes, but Mr. du Maurier ran the risk that Dickens took, in that he filled his books with peculiar people. But whereas Dickens dealt with England and wrote for the English, Mr. du Maurier

[1] A cap, somewhat similar in shape to that worn by the English infantryman; it is occasionally used by Paris law and medical students.

dealt with the French for export purposes; in the first case we could discount Micawber, in the latter we had to take the freaks for granted. On the spacious shoulders of these men a great literary edifice has been reared; their delusions have tainted the work of their inferiors: they could carry off their error by the luxuriance of their imagination, by the subtle pathos of appeals that, in others, would have been mawkish, but their disciples lacked their quality of greatness and knew not how to clothe paltry imaginings in the gorgeous trappings of art.

A tradition has grown up and waxes fat as ever, in spite of *ententes* and municipal feastings and channel tunnels; the French have certain qualities, certain characteristics, certain aspirations and, if they have not got them—well, they have got them all the same. This sturdy belief in the accuracy of one's own knowledge is a useful quality of the battering-ram class, but it has its limitations when the time for lighter weapons comes. I am aware that, in these isles, similar crazes have prevailed, but they are dying hard; the "stage" Scotchman is still with us, so is the "stage" Irishman, and so is the "stage" bumpkin whose accent serves as well for Devon as for Lancashire, but it is easy enough to detect the buffoonery because we know the real types and occasionally see them in our midst. Moreover, it does no Englishman much harm to assume that all Scots are mean or canny: he need not cross the Tweed before something happen to undeceive him and, from a single instance, he becomes as pro-Scot as he may have been anti-Scot. With the French, as with other foreign nations, it is different; we have no political relations with Scotland, whereas we have such ties with France;

if we do not understand the people we shall never understand their policy.

It becomes no man to be a Cassandra, particularly when times are good, but good times never last, and one need not be a born pessimist to believe that "something unpleasant is going to happen"; it always does. For that reason and many more, it seems imperatively necessary that we should understand the French a little better, know their opinions and general views and become acquainted with French institutions and their trend, so as to be able to prophesy what the people will do in a given case. We must divest ourselves of prejudice and give up our most cherished notions as to the fascinating schedule which has endowed the French race with the most delightful defects and the most dangerous of qualities. It must be understood, of course, that my object is not to pull down one idol to put up another: there is hardly such a thing as national character, just as there is no such thing as national dishonour; national character reveals itself in an emergency and is usually that of the strongest man of the day; nations are neither good nor bad, nor are they clever or foolish, but there is a common strain that runs through the great majority of the individual elements and that is the nearest approach to national character. It is these common strands, the warp and woof of the racial substance, that we must lay bare and examine if we really want to understand the people; in this, as in most cases, it is far better to be ignorant than to know a little and to know that little wrongly. Yet, that is what we have done: we have credited the French with all sorts of peculiarities; we have forged for them a character and, whenever we meet him, we try to force

the individual into the common mould. That is like applying a system, an invariably dangerous practice, because there always comes a time when, in a given circumstance, the system is too large or too small, and then the whole structure collapses.

And what is this wonderful character which has been fabricated by our literary lions and emphasised and garbled by our literary jackals? A very complex and curious thing, very pretty and ingenious like all clever toys and about as useful. We all know the clothes of the "stage" Frenchman, but what of the brain and soul of the "book" Frenchman?

Half our writers on the subject aim at convincing us that the Frenchman is a light and airy creature, without a care for the morrow, ever gay and cheerful, and for all this there is a basis of truth; the mistake does not proceed from a lie but from an enormous exaggeration of appearances. Any man who comes from solid England to even the dullest little provincial French town, let alone to Paris, at once has an impression of gaiety and facile laughter; the sun shines, the streets are white. This superficial impression fortifies his traditional preconception and here we have another firm believer in the theory. From externals to internals is an easy step and, at once, we find our analytical Briton delving into the recesses of the French heart; for this purpose, he apparently peruses, openly, illustrated papers which he may have purchased on the sly in Soho; he skims a few novels by Mr. Paul Bourget or Mr. Marcel Prévost, with the aid of the dictionary and of the stern eye of a moralist bent on being shocked: as a result he is most decidedly shocked and immediately rates French literature as something

exceedingly entertaining of which he must most regretfully disapprove. Our hypothetical Briton then continues his investigations and discovers over again that the daughters of his French friends have *dots* and that some of them seem to have been married in haste; the obvious conclusion is that, while repenting at leisure, they have found consolation on the lines indicated by the yellow-backed novels. Thoroughly fortified by the confirmation of his worst suspicions, our Briton, if on knowledge bent, ultimately strikes a decayed conspirator with a noble name, who explains to him that the Republic is tottering under Orleanist blows and that the country is a hotbed of revolution, chafing under the yoke of a ruthless democratic government, and that the time is coming when the lilies will supplant the hated tricolour. If properly introduced, our Briton may obtain access to certain *salons* of the *Faubourg St. Germain*, where he will hear of plots and manœuvres, of Pretenders imported inside pianos and of royalist millions waiting to be spent. With the natural love of the Briton for a monarchical *régime*, he will at least shed a tear over the beautiful bygone days and pray for a glorious revival of the splendid past.

This is a burlesque. I do not deny it; the truth is often burlesque when seen from the outside. The "book" and "newspaper" Frenchmen are its results and, therefore, they too are burlesque; the public never seems to tire of the "types." Are there, then, no plain men and women in that sunny and beautiful land? no thoughtful souls, no workers? The British nation is ready enough to credit the French with artistic understanding, even with prowess on the battlefield with a few exceptions, say in favour of Henry V and the Duke of

Wellington. Yet it apparently refuses to take the French seriously and to understand that they are really very European and not particularly Latin; in certain directions their ideas do not harmonise with British standards, because so many of these are founded on externals and France is no respecter of them.

My contention, therefore, is this: that the French nation is at heart very similar to ours, that its philosophical ideals and our own are practically identical, and that its system of government is neither the liberty of which France boasts nor the liberty of which Great Britain boasts. What I wish to show is in what particulars individuals, systems and customs differ, so as to arrive at a correct understanding of the state of things at the present time. During the last year or two the British people have been rudely enough awakened from their complacent illusions by the headlong progress of French democracy and its tilt against Army and Church; as people are, however, not very given to connecting current events and drawing conclusions from them, it may be useful to give a general view of the parties that confront one another in the political cockpit, of the individuals that compose them, and of the systems that have formed these individuals and endowed them with their impulses.

It must, of course, be understood that this is not a guide-book or an encyclopædia, for with these we are well provided. It is easy to obtain descriptions of the castles on the Loire, and of the pictures in the Louvre, as it is easy to obtain statistics relating to the shrinking birth-rate and to foreign trade. I do not claim to put forward many new facts, but to state those which should be notorious in a truthful manner. At best, a book on

a nation or a country can be but an impressionist sketch, and all that can be expected is a touch of nature; for the imaginative that is sufficient, and, for the stolid, reiteration and vigorous assertion must serve the purpose. No man can compress between two covers all that should be said of France and the French, and, even should he do so, the result would not be perfect unless the author had the gift of thought transference; yet a great deal may be done to explain apparent anomalies, and the best way appears to be to ignore them and to state the truth plainly and in its entirety.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT

A GOOD revolutionary is born, not made, like the poet with whom he, by the way, has a great deal in common; both cherish ideals, both must overcome immense difficulties and both have the habit of failure with the alternative of greatness. Thus, in all nations, a proportion of the citizens are born rioters, unconscious of it as they often may be; what visions does such a statement conjure up of slumbering fires buried deep in the hearts of apparently peaceful citizens, good husbands and fathers, who are really Guy Fawkes *sans le savoir!* Their temperament lacks opportunity to develop, mainly because there is nothing to incite them to carry the blazing torch through the homesteads, but they are there and ready. It depends, therefore, on their numbers whether revolution is going to be endemic or non-existent. To produce social movements on a large scale, either one man or a multitude is required; in the first case the peculiarities of his personality, the bravery of the man, his wit or his impertinence come so markedly to the fore that thousands of neutrals follow and bear him to the pinnacle of his hopes; in the second case the restive element kindles thousands of fires and finally sets the whole edifice ablaze. In both cases the existing system comes down with a crash,

but its downfall is attended by different results: the triumph of a man or the triumph of a people.

Thus, it becomes evident that, if a considerable section of a race are born revolutionaries, the result will be a perpetual struggle between persons and parties and the land will know no rest except under a dictator —while even changes of dictators must be taken into account; revolution is a fascinating form of sport, certainly more interesting than the most hazardous big-game shooting, perhaps even than man-hunting. If evidence be needed, consider for a moment the history of the South American republics, where revolution has been brought to the highest degree of frequency.

Strange to say, whereas revolution is a perfectly natural phenomenon, most men look upon it as an awful and abnormal thing, either very beautiful or very repugnant, according to their temperament. This view proceeds mainly from ignorance of what revolution really is. Revolution is simply extract of evolution, evolution in a hurry; when a bottle of champagne has been corked too early and, fermenting, bursts, that is a revolution. Yet we do not think it extraordinary that the bottle should burst and think it wonderful that a system should collapse, although the two cases are identical. Man is a long-suffering animal, and upon his head centuries of misrule may be heaped with impunity; feeble protests are made by individuals as the years roll on, but the bulk of the people go on dully suffering without knowing the cause of their disease; they well know that they are unhappy, though they do not know why. Yet, how hard it is to make them see the root of the evil, every reformer knows. The reason is not far to seek: the people are short-sighted and the

evil must be great before they can see it; it must be overwhelming. The champagne bottle does not burst under a given pressure, nor perhaps under double that pressure: there are no outward signs that it is about to give way, yet one day the strain becomes intolerable and then the explosion happens unexpectedly with a violence rendered more appalling by its suddenness. To complete the metaphor, let it be recalled that the bottle would never have burst if the cork had been withdrawn in time: that is the story of all popular revolutions.

The causes of such movements can all be summed up in one: grinding the faces of the people. I repeat it: the people will bear a great deal without complaint, but there comes a time when they will brook no longer the insolence of a tyrant or an oligarchy. Give men comfort, a fair measure of equity and opportunity and the means of attaining a certain degree of culture, and there will be no revolutions; systems may evolve slowly and, in fact, they will infallibly do so, but so slowly that progress will be imperceptible and painless. But treat men as cattle, refuse them the most elementary liberties, and eventually they will break loose and vent the accumulated fury of centuries upon existing and innocent systems.

A grievance never disappears; if it is flouted it returns with unwearied persistence—indeed it grows ever more clamorous. You can muzzle it, you can hide it, but you cannot destroy except by curing it. I think it was Mr. Chamberlain who said, with a different application, "You cannot stop a storm by sitting on the barometer," and in no case is it truer than in this. When to the grievance is added another and yet another, you have

the seed of revolution; the unheeded voices grow ever angrier and ever more threatening: their demands are not abstract but concrete; they know what they want and they must have it. If it be granted, the clamour subsides; if it be refused, the red flag is unfurled. There never was a popular revolution without a good reason; the mob has most of the vices of humanity and few of its virtues, but it is always right in so far as it is goaded by a real sense of injury.

Grievances are many and, if we look at them closely, we find that they all resolve themselves into a struggle for liberty. Refuse liberty and revolution will ultimately follow; withdraw it when it has been granted and revolution will follow at once. It matters not whether parliamentary government, the freedom of the Press or liberty of conscience be at stake: the desire for liberty in the abstract is the principal factor, and liberty is perhaps the only thing worth fighting for in this world. Sow the storm and you reap the whirlwind: deny men their rights and they will take yours from you. Grievances do not rapidly cause revolutions; when the Press is not free the malcontents find it particularly difficult to get to know one another, to engineer their plots and to combine their forces; organised authority has an immense advantage, due to its administrative resources and its possession of material means. Grievances would have to cry so loudly as to reach even the governing classes, as is the case in Russia, and even then progress is slow. Grievances are the dynamite, but a detonator is wanted, which rôle is filled by another agent, the agitator.

The word "agitator" is taken as an insult, but the agitator for a popular cause is really a very fine specimen of humanity; he may be quixotic, violent,

prejudiced, but at any rate he is courageous, ready to come out into the open, to suffer and, if necessary, to die for his cause. He is essential to the prompt success of a revolution; he it is whose burning speeches make more recruits than tyrant-ridden centuries; he it is who stirs the neutral and makes the sluggish current of his blood flow quicker in his veins. His word spreads through the land and soon, thanks to him alone, the whole country is ablaze. Even were there no agitators there would be revolutions, just as there are earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, but they would be slower to come and, therefore, far more terrible in their results. The agitator may string his scores of victims up to lamp-posts, but the Jacquerie will murder its thousands when the people's blood is up. He does not cause a revolution: he may hasten its coming, but it would have to happen in any case, and surely it is better to face it at once than to allow it for years to threaten the State.

Real revolution proceeds exclusively from grievances, that is understood; but there is another factor that ranks with the agitator, as it, too, hurries on the inevitable movement. It is the sudden realisation of their power by a hitherto down-trodden people; again the lack of liberty is the root cause and that alone would ultimately suffice; but there are strange things in the psychology of races, and one of them is the awakening of the people to a consciousness of its strength. You may tether an elephant to a small wooden peg and you have him secure, but, should he grasp the fact that he is strong, all goes down before him. Nations, or rather classes, are in the same position; they suffer, they are envious of other classes, but

they dare not attack them because they have no combination, no reserve strength, because they do not even know their power. Scattered they can do nothing and they know it, but slowly the classes begin to form into groups for minor purposes; their strength grows apace and, little by little, they grow more aggressive. Then, perhaps, one day they understand that they are a hundred to one, and all the accumulated pain of centuries rises before their eyes . . . there again is revolution, hastened by the new-born consciousness of power. Combination begins in the committee rooms of friendly societies and goes on in those of Trade Unions, where it assumes a more militant attitude; by degrees a more vigorous spirit is infused into it and politics come under consideration. Once it has started on that path, the new power either bends the system or breaks it; it cannot be defeated because it has behind it numbers, grievances and voracious ambition. One day, in all countries, when these combined men fully understand the power vested in them, they will rise and demand more than the system will give, and then we shall see another revolution when none who are neutral will be spared.

All this tends to show that revolution in itself is a very natural occurrence and that, in most cases, we ought not to be surprised because it happens, but because it did not happen a hundred years earlier. This being accepted, we are at once struck by the irregularity of the phenomena; in a sense there is a revolutionary zone, just as there is an earthquake zone. Within its confines, unrest is frequent and violent and the revolutionary barometer is there for every man to read. It would be invidious, as well as difficult, to in-

dicate this troublous region on the map, for it would be necessary to fix a period during which we took revolutions into account: what reason have we to take the last hundred years rather than the last five hundred? However, in the present case, the question is unimportant as we are concerned, not with the convulsions through which the world has passed, but with those that France has so magnificently survived.

Ever since 1789 when, to all intents and purposes, France made her first experiment in revolutions, political unrest and changes of *régime* have been as frequent as in the wildest of Ruritanias. The French race has vacillated from Republic to Monarchy, with an occasional dictature, until 1870, when it apparently made up its mind that the Republican system was the best; roughly speaking, from 1789 to 1870 and including both these dates, France has lived through about a dozen changes of *régime*. I advisedly say "about," as it is hardly fair to count the changes that brought the First Republic by slow stages under the dictature of Napoleon, nor the short interval after Elba during which the Emperor reasserted himself. However, whether the changes were slow or not, whether they proceeded from popular risings or from the personal ambition of a man, they took place and we can hardly reckon them as less than ten in a little over eighty years; thus the average life of French systems of government from the First Republic to the Third, and let us hope last, has been eight years. This, in itself, is a rather disturbing fact as regards the character of the French, and it would be still more threatening for the peace of Europe if we did not remember that close on forty years have elapsed since the existing system was established.

Thus we arrive at a charge sometimes levelled at the French race, viz. that it is imbued with the revolutionary spirit, that it is unreliable and that no government enjoys any chance of stability. This is an old prejudice, born in the last days of the eighteenth century, when the Great French Revolution was fresh in every mind and was held up to execration by party leaders and polemics; that would have been enough to grave it deeply into the British mind, so prone is it to accept the ancient in lieu of the accurate. The old prejudice was, I confess, considerably justified by the overthrow of successive French governments. The British have not yet arrived at the view that revolution is normal: whenever a French system was upset, they either pointed the finger of scorn at those erratic Southerners and prophesied another outbreak within a few months, or they treated the whole matter with indifference as we nowadays do a South American convulsion. The British public became accustomed to French revolutions, and not only is it with great surprise that it realises that the last was in 1870, but it is still asking itself when the next one will come. I should not like to say "never," but it is certainly not in sight. If the British took the natural view of revolutions that other nations take, they would understand that another upheaval is not likely to take place just now, because all these changes through which France has passed were the necessary birth pangs of the present system. I hope to show further on by what absolutely normal stages France has attained its present state and how essential most of them were to her development.

The obvious retort to this assertion is, of course, the question, "What reason is there for thinking that the

evolution is finished and that, in future, it will be peaceable?" It may not always be such, but, in likelihood, it will be. If we review the history of France for the last one hundred and twenty years, we find that it has been a continual struggle between absolutism of a more or less deep dye and democracy of a more or less advanced type. Each system has had several chances, in every case by favour of the reaction that followed on the downfall of its predecessor. But, whereas every time democracy came in it came in strong, every time absolutism triumphed it had to triumph cautiously, and it collapsed as soon as it tried to assert itself overmuch. Finally, democracy came in in tremendous force; it has stayed in for so long, and has ground its enemies so fine, that we may look upon it as established for ever. It may alter: there may be a slight reaction against democracy, but it is much more likely that ideas will grow more extreme; in any event the established democracy will inevitably triumph because, and here I strike the root of the old prejudice, the French have not got the revolutionary spirit.

A section of the British people, a section which is happily decreasing, holds the view that revolution is always latent in France and that it only awaits a favourable opportunity to break out; their brains are haunted by the idea of Orleanist and Bonapartist intrigues, and any arguing against this fallacy appears in their eyes in the light of plot-stifling of the very worst kind. To them I can only say that, if they waited for nearly forty years for the tidal wave that should wash away the tottering structure of the Third Republic, their patience is admirable and will no doubt be tested further. The French do not like revolutions;

in fact, being probably a less pugnacious race than the British, they may like them even less than the latter. If, in spite of this, France has revolutions and Britain has not, it is mainly because the French indulge in a revolution without analysing the position, whilst the British consider at length and then postpone action for a century. Reforms have been achieved in France by means of the gun, which is short work; in Great Britain they either proceeded from the slow pressure of vacillating public opinion or they are still on the way. I do not say that France is ahead of Great Britain in all things, but at any rate it enjoys a simplicity of government and a democratic activity unknown to the supporters of the labyrinthine laws that form the British Constitution.

When there have been revolutions in France, it has been because there were very good reasons for having them and at once. The French will not tolerate tyranny for very long and, if they wish to rid themselves of it, they are ready to adopt radical measures; in the chapter on the question of Church and State, it may be seen how the French Government has settled the difficulty in a few years. That is a kind of revolution; it has been sharp and short. Apparently the question is settled, while England and Wales continue to struggle with minor difficulties such as the education problem, and will probably continue to do so until Doomsday.

The great mass of the French people is composed of the lower middle-classes, who are perhaps of more conservative temperament than even the British; the reason is to be found in the savings which this class invariably amasses, and in the fact that millions of

peasants possess estates ranging between five and fifty acres (small holdings, according to British law). This enormous mass of persons is absolutely peaceable and aspires to nothing but quiet, the right to do what it chooses and to say what it chooses; the peasants are not very much concerned with the nature of the government, but they have found that the Republic alone secures them from interference, and they support it with an obstinacy that would have cheered the heart of a Beaconsfield in search of sound Tories. "Give us peace!" is their perpetual cry, "so that we may conduct our business, enjoy our pleasures and die content, bequeathing to our sons an equally happy future." This ideal may be high or low, but such it is; personal observation has demonstrated to me that the cherished ambition of tradesmen, officials and employees is to amass enough, by a life of toil, to live out a peaceful old age in a rural or suburban retreat. Are those your revolutionaries? your fiery *sans-culottes?* They are: interfere with their liberty and the Jacobin blood that flows in their veins will reassert itself as it did in 1830, in 1848, in 1870; they hate war but, if their country is menaced by the foreigner, they will fight him bravely; they hate internal strife, but threaten their liberty and they will rise up in arms. They will tolerate the existence of a class they detest, but they will not brook its tyranny; they will place a man or his party at their head, but not even he shall grind their faces; they have but one political god—the Republic, one and indivisible. Is not this an ideal? and is it not natural that they should have broken out into revolution every time they did? Every French Revolution has come about through good reasons that any one can understand;

whether we take them as a whole or one by one, this fact is apparent to the most biased mind.

Is it necessary to go back as far as the great Revolution of 1789? Its causes and its history have absorbed the activity of some of the most profound French, British and German thinkers; it has been described in the most impartial spirit, though some writers have not dealt fairly with it, and it has, in fact, been approached from every side. I suppose the British people know of it best through Carlyle; the traces of his resplendent piece of rhetoric are to be found in most of the opinions that are occasionally bandied about in a loose and irresponsible spirit. Carlyle gave, in this prose epic, a series of flamboyant pictures, rather than a connected narrative; his philosophical Radicalism, coloured by his mysticism, estranged him from Whiggery as from modern Liberalism; his trust in strong governments induced him to believe that the Revolution was but the prelude of an impending reconstruction, an impression which events proved to be correct. But Carlyle never had true sympathy with the upheaval, much as he may hold up for our admiration a Mirabeau or a Robespierre; cynic and pessimist, he saw the Revolution more as an avenging earthquake than as the birth of a national consciousness. Carlyle's singular isolation and his estrangement from all accepted currents of thought tended to make him harbour views that do not accord with the French character, a thing utterly alien to this most Scotch of Scotchmen. Be that as it may, and taking into account the monarchic tendencies of the British people, we find that, though the Revolution has, in a sense, been accepted in this country, it is not looked upon with favour, mainly because it was bloody

and brutal. Sympathy for a king, the weak offspring of a degenerate line, for a queen to whose charge can be laid much of the blood that was spilled, for an aristocracy who died well but who richly deserved to die, has warped the British mind and made it unfair to this great and glorious settlement of accounts.

I cannot here proceed to refute the charges of barbarity that are levelled at the movement; the Revolution began with constitutional government and it might have halted there had the *régime* not proved unworkable: as it is, the mob was let loose and, as it had a great task to accomplish, the mob lost its head as it always does. But what does it matter, now that those days are passed and that we enjoy the good while the evil has been washed away? *La Terreur* is only an incident in a great social movement which began some thirty years before the first shot was fired and is perhaps not yet over; the Revolution was not brought on by the bloodthirstiness of a class or group: it was caused by deep and cruel sufferings. Maddened by its past and its inheritance of oppression, the mob triumphant, intoxicated by its wrongs and its victories, wreaked its vengeance upon those to whom it had before then only meted out justice.

The French Revolution was the direct result of war, of national war extending from the earliest days of the Monarchy to the last; more particularly was it the result of the wars of Louis XIII, Louis XIV and Louis XV; in their train followed the most abject poverty, famine, the plague, taxes and ever more taxes. For a hundred and fifty years the people bore all loyally enough, but the measure was already full when Louis XV was dragging out the remains of a wasted life. His

successor, a good-natured *Roi d'Yvetot*, had neither the energy to fight nor the intelligence to make peace; for fifteen years he left unheeded the clamour of the people for bread, let alone its feeble cry for liberty. The people were crushed by taxes, taxes on salt, interprovincial customs which were removed too late, a ten per cent income-tax . . . and ten times more if the collector could wring it out; everywhere poverty and famine, everywhere peculation and petty tyranny and, to make matters worse, a privileged class of nobles and clerics on whom no taxes were levied though they battened on the misery of the race. The portents were unheeded; Marie-Antoinette continued to play in the Trianon gardens, indifferent to the cry of the rioters demanding bread . . . and then the storm burst and the rest is history. Can any one, even the believer in the divine right of kings, deny that the people, goaded to madness by their sufferings, must be held blameless for their excesses? They killed their thousands under the guillotine: was it too great a price to exact for the pangs of their fathers who had been starved to death, worked to death by the million? I do not seek to exculpate Robespierre, Danton, St. Just, Couthon, Marat or any other protagonist of this terrible drama: all I maintain is that the excesses themselves were the normal outcome of tyranny and of the treachery of a King and Queen who invoked the help of the foreigner against their people.

The Revolution was paid for by Reaction: that again is natural. The movement had been so violent that it had got ahead of its supporters; slowly, the tide receded and every change brought France back towards absolutism. Never would this have gone so far if

Napoleon had not flashed across the horizon like a meteor. Ability brought him from obscurity to a governing post; then, alone of all men, he saw the direction of the movement and availed himself of it with unparalleled genius: from general to *Directeur*, thence to *Consul*, to *Consul* for life and to Emperor were but natural steps in the course of an ambitious and masterful man. France worshipped him, being still in a reactionary mood and because his personality made a unique appeal to her people. He fell: the foreigner forced a Monarch, Louis XVIII, upon the conquered. Slowly, as she regained her powers, France stopped on her reactionary path and began to retrace her steps; again grievances accumulated and again the voice of democracy began to make itself heard; thus was prepared the second popular revolution. What were its causes? Was it the revolutionary habit, or was it once more the result of profound and crying grievances?

The revolution of 1830 was due to the reactionary tendencies of Charles X, to the fact that, ignoring the lessons of history, he attempted to force absolutism on a people who had tasted the rich wine of liberty. It was not without misgivings that Louis XVIII, a man of intelligence and moderation, a man of the world, contemplated his accession to the throne; no sooner was Charles X crowned than he at once indulged in unpopular appointments, by ignoring Parliament and adopting in public the manner of an Oriental potentate. Steadily the hatred of the people developed. This hatred was levelled at the man and extended to the system; in 1829 the bigoted and superstitious King accentuated his attitude and the unrest grew in propor-

tion. Charles X was a weak man and, early in 1830, fearing the growing discontent, he felt drawn towards violence, the usual weapon of the weak; no man is more brutal than a frightened weakling—the coward is a good fighter once he is run to earth. In July 1830 Charles X promulgated the famous decrees that were to prove his undoing and against which M. Thiers protested in vain. At one blow, he dissolved the Parliament the country had just elected, proclaimed a restriction of the franchise and withdrew the liberty of the Press. The response was immediate: the towns in nearly every part of the country rose as one man; for a moment the King thought of fighting, then, losing courage, decided to abdicate.[1]

Such, in a few words, is the history of the July Revolution. Again I ask: Were not the French people justified in rising? is it not natural that they should rise against such tyranny? The revolutionary spirit was not the root cause of the upheaval; true, France had behind her a tradition of revolution, for men were still living who had seen the guillotine at work. But this only gave them the courage to rise, not the desire to do so. The French saw a tyrant over them and they dethroned him; a notable proof of this is that Monarchy itself did not succumb, for Parliament selected a kinsman of Charles X as king of the French (no longer "King of France"), who peacefully ascended the throne under the name of Louis-Philippe I. How he maintained his position for eighteen years is a mystery; perhaps by sheer simplicity and ignorant good nature. His incapacity in the selection of counsellors was

[1] This chapter should be read in conjunction wlth the chapter dealing with the evolution of the Constitution ("The Constitution").

counterbalanced by the continual strife of parties; he had not the craft to *divide et impera*, but he kept his balance skilfully enough among conflicting elements.

Louis-Philippe was a democratic king and the celebrated cartoon that turned his face into a pear did not lessen his popularity, though it was tinged with good-humoured contempt. The King fell in great part because his kingdom was mismanaged; his foreign policy was poor, in so far as it brought France in conflict with Great Britain, which course, so history tells us, has rarely profited any nation; his home policy resulted in ever-growing poverty. The analysis of the state of things at the time does not reveal any very salient facts. Everything was wrong: crops were bad, business bad and the stock-markets nervous. The measures introduced by the Government did not appear to mend matters much, so that unrest began very soon after Louis-Philippe's accession and, without growing to an alarming extent, persisted to the last day of his reign. At last the malcontents came out into the open and fiery political speeches began to make themselves heard . . . again the mediocre man sought to break the power of the people and forbade a political banquet, which was to be held in Paris. Immediately, the town rose, the troops turned against the ruler who, alone and helpless, abdicated after a feeble struggle. Thus the Revolution of 1848 installed the Second Republic, because the people were weary of kings and their favourites and of the abuses on which they fattened.

France had one more step to make before she emerged into democracy; she had to come under the influence of a clever and interesting personality, Prince

Louis-Napoleon. He had something of the width of outlook of his great ancestor; his career was a series of masterful assertions backed by daring. President, President for life, Emperor in virtue of a referendum which Erckman-Châtrian alleges to have been gerrymandered, within four years of the fall of Louis-Philippe, Napoleon III was installed at the Tuileries as hereditary Emperor of the French. He was not without parts or generosity; indeed, his quixotism led him into conflict with every windmill within his sight. His war with Austria, above all, his extraordinary attempt to establish an empire in Mexico, so ably foiled by President Diaz, did not contribute to making him unpopular; he had the quality that the French call *panache*, an untranslatable word well expressed by the effect of heavy plumes on a burnished helmet. Moreover, he avoided the temptation which had played Louis-Philippe so sorry a turn, and began with Great Britain a commercial friendship from which France only departed, much to her disadvantage, in 1892. Though the wars were costly and taxes heavy enough, business was good; the wars were hardly popular, but the French, though peaceable, like a good fight: it is exciting and they often do well at the great game. But the Emperor and his consort never gained the liking of the people, who were surfeited with Monarchs and castes and did not favour the wastefulness of courts. Moreover, the old Republicans of 1848 remained bitter enemies of the *régime* and made their influence felt at every opportunity; little by little, the country turned against the ruler, in great part because it had a natural dislike for personal rule. Then came the terrible year; Napoleon was hardly responsible for the great war which was forced upon him by

the iron will of Bismarck, who had just broken the power of Denmark and of Austria and who felt that France was the strong enemy whose pride he must lower. Napoleon III knew this well and, on the most elementary grounds of policy, he could not allow a Hohenzollern to reign in Madrid if a Hohenzollern reigned in Berlin. The war came. It was short and sharp; defeat after defeat overwhelmed the eagles; on September 2nd and 3rd came the crowning disaster, Sedan, the army routed, the Emperor a prisoner.

The revolution was immediate and practically unresisted: thus the Third Republic, great and glorious as it is to-day, came into being when all was dark, when all seemed lost. It survived the most terrible war of the century; it survived the financial disasters that followed it; it was the only cure. For the third time, the French people wiped out a system that was rotten and registered a vow that never again should it be implanted in the land. Nearly forty years of peace and prosperity show that, at last, France has found a haven of political rest; in her righteous wrath she rose and, on the smoking ruins of '71, she has erected the great edifice that we know to-day, stable and harmonious in all its parts.

This short sketch of revolutionary history may or may not have convinced the reader that the nation has never risen for the love of rioting; should he need further details, text-books are not lacking, but no amount of information can detract from the value of the facts I have adduced. The French have not got the revolutionary spirit, but they are not afraid of revolution; they know that the ordeal by fire is one that a *régime* must go through if it is worth adopting;

if fire and the sword must be used, the French do not shrink from the necessity; they are impatient and will not let evolution do in a century what the gun can do in a night.

Revolutions have been more frequent in France than in Great Britain; indeed, since the final fall of the Stuarts, no revolution has honoured British history. How the Great Revolution ever came about, I can hardly understand, unless the British have changed a great deal. No man living can picture the conditions under which the people lived in Stuart times, but it is next to incredible that their poverty can have been greater than is that of the masses at the present time. A religious whirlwind swept the land and a great leader appeared; without Puritanism and without Cromwell, there would have been no revolution; religious enthusiasm and the personal magnetism of the greatest figure in British history took the place of popular indignation. Where Cromwell led, others followed: without him, perhaps none would have stirred.

An occasional rising is all that Great Britain knows; even the most violent, such as the Bristol Riots, before the Reform Act, 1832, or the Bread Riots, do not partake of the wholesale and sweeping character of French political movements. The British lack solidarity and do not readily kick against the pricks; provided that their personal liberty be not endangered, they appear to care little for national freedom. I do not suggest that there are, at the present day, grounds for a bloody revolution, but I cannot help noting that all political progress in Great Britain has been made at a slow rate in the face of great opposition and that it has been very small; popular Bills have had to be brought in time

after time before they were passed, even in a modified form. Sometimes they have been rejected and then the clamour of the people has soon died away.

The British do not understand the art of revolution-making; they lack political energy. For instance, the Education Bill, 1906, may have been a good Bill or a bad one, but it was apparently brought forward on behalf of the majority of the people. It is idle to assert that which cannot be checked, but it is possible that, in France, its rejection by a king or a house of peers would have brought about a revolution. Either the majority or an energetic minority would have risen in arms and there would have been an end to such a body as the House of Lords at which the authors of the Bill now impotently rail. I do not say that this is either desirable or undesirable, but history provides inferential evidence that the French would not have tolerated such treatment.

We must not forget that the French are a hot-blooded race, which must serve to explain their energy and excuse their excesses. Revolution is easiest when the sun shines (as it does in South America) and men's minds are alert; the British race is stolid, whereas the French are mercurial; thus the latter have always been ready when the time to act came. They have not got the revolutionary spirit, but they have got an aptitude for revolution, not only the faculty of knowing that they suffer as a race, but also from what evils they suffer and the means that must be adopted if the equilibrium jeopardised by the arrogance of a man or a class is to be safeguarded.

CHAPTER III

THE REPUBLIC

THERE are few members of civilised nations, whatever be the party to which they may owe allegiance, who if pressed would not confess themselves Republicans; we are not all Socialists but we are practically all Republicans, because the former creed demands of us that we shall control our individuality, whereas the latter exalts it to a divine degree. Thus, the essential principles of Republicanism appeal to all men, to most of them subtly, so subtly that they awake to the consciousness of their opinion only when their liberty is threatened, and even then they often fear to proclaim the truth to themselves. Thus we have Republican Royalists, Republican Imperialists, sometimes Republican Socialists; this last designation is no more essentially paradoxical than the two former. For some reason inherent in the nature of man, we cling to forms of government that are in themselves obsolete and meaningless and practise that against which we preach. The weakness of all absolutist and semi-absolutist governments lies not in the fact that they are bad, but in the fact that they are out of date. There has been a time when a benevolent form of Socialism assembled men in tribes whose energy and possessions were grouped, when individual property was practically

non-existent; while men remained unsophisticated, moderate in their desires and truly religious, the system worked efficiently: the growth of property and still more of population made the system cumbrous; men ceased to be fit subjects for its application, and it died out. It is futile to hope that we may return to it, not because it is too good for us or not good enough, but simply because we have evolved and evolution never really goes back, though it may appear to do so. At the present time tribal ownership still prevails among uncivilised races, and it is slowly disappearing as these races rise in the human scale, a sufficient demonstration of the above theory. The feudal system had its turn and did excellent work; in lawless days it proved the one means of social salvation and kept together the struggling and ignorant masses, under a rule hard, it is true, but necessary. Again, as man grew more enlightened, the feudal system became obsolete and died out, simply because it was no longer needed, and so wasted away like an atrophied limb; in countries that have not reached the pitch of Western civilisation, feudalism is still doing its work but is slowly losing ground as men gain in learning and in sense of responsibility. The feudal system was superseded by Monarchy pure and simple in various and more or less crude forms; it is necessary to draw a distinction between absolutism and constitutional Monarchy, though they are of the same nature. Both proceed from the need felt by new-born nations of a leader strong enough to restrain the warring elements, and for that reason they give him hereditary rank and rights; his position being secured the leader can impose his will upon all men and work for the good of the greater number with a due regard for the

minority. Again, sometimes because the leader abused his position, but always in the course of natural evolution, the might of absolutism has been curbed in most civilised countries; men felt that they no longer needed this strong restraining hand and they limited its power by imposing a constitution upon the princely family whom they retained at their head.

Here the ways part: constitutional Monarchy being practically identical in its nature (though not in its results) with a Republican system, civilised races should not be divided into those that are still in Monarchic tutelage and those that have evolved into Republican freedom. The Republic as a system of government is an accident; it is the fruit of a violent reaction or the result of a fact; it is not the crowning height to which a people starting from savagery must inevitably attain. It is easy to conceive of a liberty-loving Monarchy and a tyrannous Republican system, though this is not likely to happen for reasons apart from the system itself. The American Republic proceeded from the dictatorial interference of the mother country in colonial affairs; the French Republic sprang from a short-lived constitutional Monarchy. The case of the United States cannot be admitted as normal because, once the country had thrown off the British yoke, it had no alternative but a republic; France on the other hand is a type.

When, in 1789, the might of the people made itself felt, in spite of the violence of the upheaval Monarchy survived under a constitutional system; whether or not it would have lived through the storm born of centuries of suffering is unknown, for the King precipitated his fall by flight, and his case was not improved by the action of inimical foreign monarchies.

The Republic

The Republic and the Monarchy are different systems of government and nothing can bring them into line; Republicanism and Monarchism can, however, be similar in practice. I say "can" advisedly, for there is no reason why they should not, but in fact they never are; the reason, at which I hinted above, is that Monarchy inevitably fosters a peculiar form of class feeling. This feeling is normal and practically invincible; whether the castes be based on lineage, on knowledge or on money there is a natural tendency to form them; class feeling is a cramping and detestable thing, but if we must submit to it, let it be to the noblest form. The class system based on intellectual value is not ideal as it gives men undue advantage if they are born with great gifts, but it is fair from the point of view of the community that benefits by their ability; the plutocratic classification stands on a far lower scale, for money is not only gained by the able or the honest, but it has the redeeming point that it is practically accessible to all men; the classing of men according to lineage is the third system and the most unsatisfactory. We can respect a man because he is learned; we can respect him because he is rich if we know him to be honest; we cannot respect him because a remote ancestor has left him renown and a resounding name. Yet it is this very system that Monarchy adopts and for a very simple reason; the prince is a star of the first magnitude and must surround himself with men who are worthy of him; he can choose among the intellectually great, when they deign to be chosen, but it is far easier to select among the descendants of men who were associated with the prince's ancestors, among men who have traditions of unswerving personal loyalty. More-

over, the omnipotent prince has the right to dispense favours; the most prized by many men are titles and orders and those offices that yield no profit but mark out a man from among his fellows; as these favours cost the prince nothing and are much appreciated, he distributes them in consideration of personal services and thus gathers round him an aristocratic class that preys on the governing body and basks in the sunshine of the prince's favour.

It is the aristocracy alone that differentiates a Republic from the most enlightened of constitutional Monarchies; in the former all classes are accessible to all men; in the latter they are easily entered by some men but with difficulty by most. Monarchy perpetuates in fact that which it may repudiate in name; a king and a court may govern a country successfully, but it is difficult to conceive that they can govern it with the goodwill and for the benefit of the masses. The Republican ideal is of all the loftiest; based on individualism and on the recognition of the equality of the rights of men, it soars towards the lofty heights of perfect government. A Republic may diverge from its path but the ideal remains unchanged; equal opportunities of education, of fortune, of happiness for all men; equal rewards; equal punishments. Crown the edifice with freedom; endow the public powers with wisdom and mercy, with energy and with sensibility, and the Republican system can rise to heights that no class-governed country can hope to reach.

That is the great ideal which emerged in France from the seas of blood of *La Terreur*, pure and undefiled as Venus from the waves; no nobler because simpler words were ever spoken than the Declaration of the Rights of

Man, and it is because they know this that the French love the Republic with something of personal passion, like a great beneficent goddess of strength and of peace. They are conscious of the gifts that the Republic has showered upon them, liberty, equality, fraternity, and they are deeply attached to this incorporeal mistress; the very name "Marianne" of the austere and beautiful head that figures the Republic is tender; the symbol is as different in spirit from the British lion as it is from the double-headed eagle or the Chinese dragon. Marianne is not of the brutal conquerors; she is strong but pacific, justice-loving and generous; look upon Roty's beautiful coin, showing the slim female figure sowing the good grain broadcast over the sweeping fields of the world, over the fields already kissed by the first rays of the distant rising sun: how much poetry and strength are concentrated in this tiny picture! and that is France and still more the Republic, as understood by a true Frenchman.

The French have tried all systems of government, from anarchy to dictature; they have tried them again and again and all but the Republican system have been found wanting. Kings and their polished swarms of courtiers, Emperors and their rough soldiery, Republics and semi-Republics have been marshalled before the court of public opinion and all but *the* Republic have been dismissed; it has on the people a grip that is not likely to relax. Above all things the French know that their most precious possessions are bound up in the Republic. The latter's soul is the soul of the race: if the Republic were to fall, France would sink in the social scale. But it will not fall; the tricolour is nailed to the mast and it is not likely to make way either for the eagles or for the lilies.

If the Republic has acquired such a hold over the hearts and passions of the people, it must be because there is in it something elusive and yet noble that the people can pin their faith to; abstract systems do not fascinate the masses to any such degree as does a popular prince. The very insolence of a ruler is looked upon as strength; his equity passes for clemency; the payment of his debts is accounted generosity. An abstract system on the other hand must needs be of a noble order if it is to dominate the people and win their love: it rarely makes itself felt except to punish and to forbid, so that unless it have a great soul it cannot hope to live in the heart of the nation. The Republican system in general and the French Republic in particular can alone hope to triumph; in the case of France, the system is based upon a document so noble, simple and comprehensive, that no man who will read it in an unprejudiced spirit can deny its beauty and its truth. I refer to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.

The Declaration was laid down by the first Republican parliament between the 20th and the 26th day of August, 1789. The spirit that gave birth to the epoch-making document was illumined by the fires of the Bastille, consecrated by a common oath to achieve the freedom of the land and exalted by the suppression of privilege. The race was pregnant with great deeds; the coming upheaval had not yet begun, but passionate oratory had raised the ideals of the people to an intolerable pitch. In this extraordinary atmosphere, effulgent and electric, the first parliament brought into the world this most enduring witness of the greatness of man.

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN AND OF THE CITIZEN

THE elect of the French people, constituted as a National Assembly, consider that ignorance, obliviousness, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortune and of corrupt government; they have resolved to state in a solemn Declaration the natural, inalienable and sacred rights of man, so that this Declaration be ever present before all members of the social body and remind them for ever of their duties and of their rights; so that the exercise of legislative and executive power may be compared at any time with the object of political institutions and thus increase their good repute; so that the demands of citizens may henceforth be founded on simple and irrefutable principles and promote the upholding of the Constitution and the happiness of all men.

In consequence thereof the National Assembly acknowledges and proclaims, before and under the auspices of the Supreme

Being, the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Article 1. All men are born and remain free and have equal rights. Social distinctions can proceed only from services rendered to the community.

Article 2. The object of all political groupings is the preservation of the natural, inalienable and sacred rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security and the right to resist oppression.

Article 3. The principle of sovereign power is vested essentially in the nation. No body, no man, may exercise any authority not emanating expressly from the latter.

Article 4. Liberty is the doing of all things not hurtful to other men: thus the exercise of the natural rights of man has no bounds beyond those which secure for other members of Society the enjoyment of the same rights. The Law alone can establish these bounds.

Article 5. The Law can forbid none but those deeds which endanger Society. That which the Law does not forbid may by no man be hindered and no man may be

made to do that which the Law does not enjoin upon him.

Article 6. The Law is the expression of the common will. All citizens have the right to take part in its making, either personally or through their representatives. The Law whether it punish or reward must be the same for all men. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible for all honours, functions and public duties, according to their ability, no other distinction than their virtues or their natural gifts being admissible.

Article 7. No man may be accused, arrested or imprisoned save in those cases that the Law specifies and in conformity with the procedure laid down by it. Those men who solicit, forward or execute arbitrary commands must be punished ; but any citizen attached or arrested in virtue of the Law must at once submit ; should he resist, he becomes guilty.

Article 8. The Law may establish none but strictly and evidently necessary penalties and no man shall be punished except in virtue of a law established and promul-

gated before the committing of the crime, provided that the Law shall be legally applied.

Article 9. As a man is deemed innocent until he shall have been declared guilty, should it be necessary to arrest him no rigour that is not essential for the securing of his person shall be tolerated by the Law.

Article 10. No man may be persecuted on account of the views, religious or other, that he may harbour, provided that their upholding do not disturb public order as established by the Law.

Article 11. The unfettered exchange of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: any citizen may therefore say, write, or print that which he may think fit, and he shall be responsible for the abuse of his liberty in such cases as the Law may determine.

Article 12. The safeguarding of the rights of man and of the citizen necessitates the maintenance of public forces: these forces are therefore established for the advantage of all men and not for the personal use of those to whom they are entrusted.

Article 13. So that the public forces may be maintained and administrative expenses defrayed a common contribution must be levied. It must be equally distributed among the citizens in proportion to their capacity to pay it.

Article 14. All citizens have the right, either personally or by proxy, to ascertain the necessity of public contributions, to assent freely to their imposition, to trace the use that may be made of them, to investigate their distribution, their incidence, their collection and the period during which they are to be collected.

Article 15. Society may demand from any official an account of his administration.

Article 16. Any Society in which the preservation of rights is not ensured, and powers not distinctly defined, possesses no Constitution.

Article 17. Property being an inviolable and sacred right, no man may be deprived of it, unless public interest demand it evidently and according to the Law, provided moreover that a fair indemnity be first paid to him.

In these few hundred words the National Assembly has condensed all that is essential to the elementary happiness of man; for no man can be happy unless he be free, and no man is truly free who does not possess and exercise his rights to free thought, free speech, free actions. Boldly, without rhetoric, in words which owe their impressiveness to their simple directness, the first Republican parliament lays down normal principles of government and indicates the lines on which it must be conducted if it is to lead the citizens to prosperity and power.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man was necessary in a day when men coming at last into their own were likely to forget the rights of the individual. For a moment, during the bloody days of '93, its simple eloquence was forgotten, but its principles remained untouched and undisputed and are the foundation of all the constitutions that France has proclaimed, from the first to the last. Its inspiration was, however, foreign; it is distinctly traceable to the famous North American Declaration of July 1776. This is a longer and more wordy document which cloaks under long and involved sentences the terse pronouncements of the declaration on which it is itself based, that of the State of Virginia on the first of June of the same year. In the Virginian and the French declarations we find practical identity of views; each proclaims principles that the other has left aside, but the chief points as regards liberty and equality are common to both. As the American Declaration preceded the French by some thirteen years, and as its contents were certainly known to the educated classes of France, this singularly close likeness forces us to infer that it served as a model and as a guide; I do not

seek to decry the French Declaration, for no originality is needed to describe that which we all feel in our hearts, but I wish to trace the descent of the great document and to make clear by comparison with the basis of the only other great Republic, that the same principles are common and essential to both. Indeed, it appears easier to proclaim for oneself these great and everlasting truths than to follow the lead of an alien race in rebellion against the established order of things. To raise on high the standard of freedom induces in man a holy feeling of exaltation: as he soars towards liberty he grows nearer to God, whereas to follow other men, who have drained the cup already, may be a sterile and thankless task; for that reason, let us pay tribute to the radiant idealism of those eighteenth-century dreamers who produced a document which marks an epoch in the history of man.

Setting aside for the nonce the ancestry of the Declaration, we are induced to examine it more thoroughly; at first sight our impression is that volumes might be written round it, as every one of its seventeen articles could be made the basis of a chapter, some of many chapters. Every proposition of philosophy, every tenet of morality was cast into the melting pot to produce the Declaration; a thorough discussion of the articles would therefore embrace the entire range of abstract thought. On the other hand, when we consider these articles, so lucid, so comprehensive, we feel how unnecessary comment is, and that the document, like all elementary truths, can stand alone and be understood of all men. Without attempting to steer a middle course between these two alternatives, let us however note a few salient points.

The first one is the stress laid on the right of property; the Declaration assumes that all wealth then held is legitimate and, in any case, a sort of plenary amnesty is proclaimed and property legalised in the eyes of the State. The importance of this point lies in the modern development of Socialism; the Declaration has in view individual property and knows nothing of State ownership; it leaves a loophole for compulsory purchase, but between that and Carl Marxism there is an abyss. I do not seek to take sides on the question, but I wish to emphasise the fact that Republicanism hereby marks its rooted difference from Socialism; it is true that Liberals are Radicals in embryo and that Radicals are potential Republicans, but it is not true that Republicans are the stock from which Socialists will grow. The reason is that Republicanism is a political system which influences economics indirectly, whereas Socialism is an economic system and uses politics to make its power felt. A Republican may be a Socialist, but he need not be one; a Socialist cannot be less than a Republican, but he need not be one at all. Thus, inferentially, we see the ancient Republican law take up an emphatic stand in favour of individualism; in these days when in France coalition governments produce bastard combinations, let it not be forgotten that Mirabeau and Auguste Comte might not have seen eye to eye.

We must also note that the Declaration incorporates the Habeas Corpus Act, many years after its application in Great Britain; its inclusion proceeded mainly from the abuse that had been made during the previous two centuries of *lettres de cachet* committing men to the Bastille without a hearing. Thus liberty is safeguarded,

but in another direction the Declaration thinks fit to qualify it; recent events more fully dealt with in another chapter lend special interest to Article 10: "No man may be persecuted on account of the views, *religious or other*, that he may harbour, provided that their upholding *do not disturb public order* as established by the Law." The Republic has been taxed with tyrannous and brutal interference with liberty of conscience and charged with having belied its traditions. The indictment falls to the ground when we read again this memorable article: the Republic concedes to all men liberty of conscience, provided public order be not disturbed; liberty is conditional: if it has been abused, as is alleged, then its exercise must be curtailed. This question is specially considered in another chapter, as aforesaid; it is therefore unnecessary to discuss the matter further, but it must be accepted that, whether the action of the Republic be worthy of praise or of blame, it is in no wise unconstitutional, nor does it in the least derogate from the sacred principles of the system. The Declaration is in no wise aimed against religious feeling; not only is it made "under the auspices of the Supreme Being" but it imposes upon the liberty of the Press and freedom of speech similar restrictions, such as may be brought into being by the responsibility with which men are endowed and by the threat it levels at those who abuse their rights. This is best expressed in Article 4, which leaves a wide margin for the most individualistic, the Anarchist being left out of count, as he cannot hope to find a place in the orderly and solid scheme on which the modern Republic is based.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man is the mother

of the French Constitution, as are its principles, in a greater or lesser degree, of all human constitutions. Its traditions have never died, and in all likelihood never will; the Declaration was accepted by King Louis XVI some six weeks after it had been formulated, and since that time it has never disappeared from French history; its principles were extended under the more extremist sections of the Legislative Assembly and of the Convention that successively replaced the Constituting Assembly; their Radicalism was brought out and accentuated under the auspices of the Jacobins but they were not altered. *La Terreur* even, the execution of the Girondins, too moderate for those strenuous days, are not in flagrant contradiction with the principles of the Declaration, for in the eyes of the extremists, honest men, though ruthless, those that we call victims were traitors to the State.

We must leave out the Napoleonic period, when the principles of '89 were continuously flouted, when the ex-Republic obeyed without a word the strong hand of its master; Napoleon was an accident, a monster in the true sense of the word, so that all things that happened in the days of the Eagle form a separate chapter in history. This becomes self-evident when we note how, immediately after the fall of the Empire, the old *sans-culotte* principles reassert themselves; the constitutions by means of which Louis XVIII, Charles X, Louis-Philippe reigned were directly inspired by the constitution of the First Republic, hardly modified by the reintroduction of the Monarchy; so much so is this the case that we see Charles X fall because he attempts to suppress the liberty of the Press (Article 11) and dismisses the representatives of the nation (Article

3); likewise the immediate if not root cause of the downfall of Louis-Philippe lies in his attempting to restrict the right of meeting, which is also to be inferred from Article 11. The Declaration of the Rights of Man is in French political history the stone on which whosoever falleth shall be broken.

Again, the masterful hand of an Emperor seizes France in its grip and again the Declaration falls into abeyance, though not to the same degree as it did under the great Dictator; but again it reasserts itself, and at the first sign of weakness of the Empire, not six weeks after the first shot of the war of 1870, it rises into the mind of the people and the Empire is overturned. Then the Declaration is once more and for ever established as head of the corner; it pervades every line of the modern constitution of France. Never has the trust of France wavered when the great manifesto was in question; it has at times been under a cloud but never for very long, for the French are liberty-loving and truly Republican. They have paid the price of political knowledge and they know its value; they have passed through the fires of the past and have emerged purer and stronger in political faith; a Republic does not necessarily mean happiness for all men, but it does mean a chance of happiness for all men, and of all things in the world that are worth acquiring such a chance is the most precious; the gift of opportunity ensures ever fresh courage; hope does not spring eternal in the human breast, but it may if a man feels that the world is his to conquer. Thus the French have learnt at last that which the northern Americans knew more than a hundred years before, that there is no system in the world so generous or so fraught with

possibilities of universal happiness as the Republican, and for that reason, if for that only, they cling to it with a devotion that no personal loyalty to a sovereign can ever equal. To love an abstract idea is a loftier thing than to love a man; true, it is easier to risk life for one who has become as part of oneself than to endanger it for the sake of the unseen; thus, when abstract worship is attained, in spite of all obstacles, it is overwhelming in its intensity.

The blood that drenched the land during *La Terreur* was not wasted; those that died, whether Royalist or Republican, died well; the lives of Louis and his wife were sacrificed on the same altar as were those of Danton, Condorcet, Desmoulins, Robespierre. They died for different ideals, but they were the chosen sacrificial victims offered up to the Republican ideal. So much has the land suffered and so much has it given, so many wars has it waged and so many storms has it weathered that it has grown to love the Republic with a holy love. The political feeling that animates modern France can be summed up in one sentence: There is but one France and one Republic and both are one, one and indivisible.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONSTITUTION

THE French Constitution is and has been a written one ever since the days when the National Assembly laid, by means of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the foundation on which successive French constitutions were built and on which rests the resulting constitution of to-day. It is a short and simple document, comprehensive and clear, as is usually the case with writings in the French language. Any man can read and understand it, as he can read the *Code Napoléon* and its additions; thus all Frenchmen are presumed to be cognisant of the law; thus also there is little work in France for the law-officer and the quibbling politician.

I am aware that the British race clings with pathetic loyalty to that hoary and sacrosanct abstraction known as the British Constitution; few British subjects could, however, put forward in a clear and complete manner the principles on which their government is based. Should it become necessary to settle a constitutional point, we must, of course, fly to Hansard or to a specialist; should we appoint two specialists and if the one be blue and the other buff there is no knowing what the verdict may be. I must say that the idea of having to settle a constitutional point strikes the man

who has lived in a land endowed with a written constitution dumb with amazement. Why in the name of common sense should there be such a thing as a constitutional point? The organic laws on which a society is based should be so clear and so simple that no point could be raised. Moreover, a written constitution enables the legislator to do away with, at least, a portion of the past; it is usually enough for an institution or a law to be old for it to be bad, because there is every chance that it will be obsolete, that it will have been framed for old, not for modern, needs. I am aware that this theory is in direct conflict with British opinion and that the older the institution is, the more it is beloved; I hold no brief against the British Constitution, which will withstand fiercer attacks than any I could venture to make, but it is essential to compare its spirit with that of the French Constitution if it be desired to understand the latter.

The French race has no respect for antiquity; the expression "good old," which we apply affectionately to obsolescence has, it is true, its exact equivalent in French, but it is not often used because of the contradiction that exists in the French mind between the two adjectives. There is no hostility against dead days and dead customs, but the French have no more liking for an old law than for an old shoe; so long as the law suits the times and the shoe keeps out the wet, the French will retain them; as soon as either shows signs of wear, the nation decides to make a change. This is possibly a very shocking and unstable state of things, savouring of anarchism and no doubt inferior to the lamb-like submission with which we accept the legacy of centuries. The British love a thing because it is old;

the French may love it even if it be old but not because: there is no merit in age; indeed there is a *prima facie* case against it, as an old law may be presumed out of date and the onus of proof laid upon it.

For this reason, the French have never shrunk from altering their constitution ever since, in revolutionary days, the nation arrived at man's estate. Every *régime* has left its trace upon the basic principles of government and the result is an all-embracing and liberal system. Before we proceed to analyse it, a few words should be devoted to the question of written constitutions, a subject on which the French have felt strongly for the last hundred and twenty years.

French constitutions have always been written; whether the *régime* was Republican or Monarchic, a document has always been prepared and has clearly set forth the duties and rights of men and of classes. In this the French have not been singular; indeed, in those countries that enjoy representative institutions, I can recall no exception to the rule beyond Great Britain. All European states have written constitutions, a copy of which can be purchased by any man for a few pence or consulted free of charge at the library of the seat of government; all recently formed states, such as the South American republics and the British self-governing colonies, also have written constitutions. Great Britain stands practically alone in this matter (for even Russia already possesses an embryo constitution in writing), or must be classed with savage sultanates. Singularly enough, Great Britain has granted written constitutions to various colonies but she has not put her own house in order and continues to grope in her archives. Thus, when the French adopt the principle that a constitution

should be written, they are at one with the majority; there may be truth in the Ibsenian theory that the majority is always wrong, but modern political methods of government are based on majorities and I cannot conceive of any other. Unanimity was, history tells us, adopted only in the case of Poland and history also tells us what the result was for that now defunct state.

The main object in having a written document, to which reference can be made in case of doubt, is to enable the governing body to know exactly its powers and its duties, instead of having to ferret them out of the lumber-room of dead laws and make wild guesses when there is no information. The French are a precise people; they like to know exactly what they owe and what is due to them, both materially and politically; for that reason, they will not accept vague traditions as a guide, but demand that a short document should be framed which will settle all future difficulties.

The French have always clung to written expression as opposed to tradition, because they instinctively felt that this vexed question of interpretation would come to the fore if the constitution were not precise. They do not love the legal profession and there are not in France a tithe of the barristers and solicitors with whom Great Britain is blessed, nor is their occupation so lucrative. This is due, not only to the written constitution, which affects only certain cases, but also to the fact that, in the same spirit, the law is written instead of being judge-made, sometimes judge-unmade. The French love precision; that is the secret of the elegance of their literature, of the delicacy and skill of their arts, of the lucidity of their philosophers, scientists and statesmen. Tradition excludes precision, whereas writ-

ing promotes it: for that reason, the French have never forsaken the ideal of a written constitution.

Another consideration also arises: nothing is so difficult to modify permanently as a traditional constitution, nor so easy to alter as a written one. We must not pin our faith to externals, to the appearance of difficulty, but we must look to the ultimate result. When a written constitution has to be modified, violent opposition has to be faced, everywhere the iconoclast is denounced and every word of the new text is fought tooth and nail; once the battle is over, however, and the new principle is embodied in the organic law, it is there for good and can be removed only by open and definite action. On the other hand, if the constitution be traditional, a new principle may be introduced by slow, imperceptible stages; it is influenced by literature, by polemics, by the courts of law; the new theory passes into the constitution by degrees, but it can as easily pass out; in fact, the traditional constitution is wax to receive but also wax to retain. Thus no man can ever tell exactly what the true situation is; such questions as those of the latchkey voter are cases in point: conflicting decisions have been arrived at all over the country and inequalities established. At the present time, this part of the law is a tangled skein: some men have a vote because they have a latchkey and some have a latchkey and no vote. It would be ludicrous if it were not pathetic to observe the result of the application of interpretation to matters electoral.

In one sense only can the unwritten constitution be defended: it may be argued that it is elastic, which a solemn declaration never can be, that it is thus able to keep abreast and even ahead of the times. This is a

tempting theory; it conjures up a vision of perpetual progress, of an enlightened government intelligently shaping itself, day by day, to the wavering needs and aspirations of the people. Like most fascinating theories, it is, however, a fallacy. Governments never evolve: like fungi they exist and like limpets they cling, but they never change their ways until they are coerced by the intolerable pressure of public clamour. Thus, we find the government in charge of a vague and antique code able to twist it to suit their passing convenience, unable to alter its shape in a radical manner, simply because it has none. We do not want a constitution to be elastic any more than we want a staff to be pliable: if we are to put faith in the value of either, they must be sturdy, rigid, uncompromising things. When the constitution is out of date, we can scrap it, but meanwhile we shall know exactly how we stand.

The modern French Constitution has not come into being without passing through troubles and adventures; every change of *régime* has left its mark on the document, sometimes in an unexpected manner, as Reactionary governments have not invariably adopted a Reactionary constitution. The French did not shrink from change in this respect any more than they shrank from revolutions; even since 1875, when the present Constitution was laid down, minor modifications have been introduced. One of these was the exclusion of the laws relating to the Senate from the Constitution, which shows how easily a written document can be altered to suit new requirements, whilst the difficulties between Lords and Commons in this country give rise periodically to a kind of crisis.

The Constitution

The modern French Constitution is based on the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen; ever since 1789, when that glorious pronouncement was made, it has proved the foundation of all the French constitutions, a foundation which no *régime*, however Reactionary, not even the First Empire, has entirely ignored. It must, of course, be understood that the Declaration itself was never taken as a constitution; it was too general, too far-reaching and its application would have been impossible. The first Constitution was based upon it and included little beyond its principles, but it entered into detail; it was the workable scheme into which the great idea was incorporated.

The first French Constitution was placed on the statute book which, legally speaking, was still virgin, on the 3rd September 1791, and was accepted by the King ten days later. It will thus be seen that the document was no mushroom growth, springing up during the fury of revolution by favour of the mistaken enthusiasm of a suddenly emancipated people; it was debated for two years by a national assembly where the people, the nobility and the clergy were represented in force; its articles were passed one by one, assented to by all parties and finally accepted by the King of his own free will. I mean by this that he was not a prisoner; he knew that to refuse might be dangerous, but he was still a king and a free man; indeed, nine months later, he was still powerful enough to veto two important decrees, the one banishing those priests who refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Constitution, the other sanctioning the encamping of the twenty thousand federated soldiery. But for his flight and arrest, it is even possible that he might have preserved his crown.

Apart from the Declaration, interesting points of detail are raised and solved in the Constitution. All titles and peerages, orders of nobility and privileges appertaining thereto are suppressed; that was to be expected, and who will take exception to it? Also, an excellent provision is introduced, forbidding the sale or bequest of any public office; many years were to elapse before Great Britain could reach such a point as regards commissions in the army, for instance. At the same time, the Constitution, in its resolute war against privilege, suppresses all the commercial and industrial guilds on the plea that they fettered enterprise and were inimical to progress; had such an upheaval taken place in Great Britain, we should have no livery companies, which would not matter very much, and no city corporation, which none but the lovers of the picturesque would miss.

The law also acknowledged the right of all men to petition the Government and to assemble when and as they may think fit, provided it be without weapons. Moreover, and this is highly interesting in view of recent events, the Constitution lays down that "all properties destined to religious service . . . belong to the nation and are at all times at its disposal." Let us not forget this when recent French Governments are taxed with arbitrariness and brutality: nearly a hundred and twenty years ago the principle was stated and the properties that were later given in trust to the Church have only returned to their real owners. In this regard it should also be noted that, according to this Constitution, the citizens were to have the right of choosing their own ministers—a valuable privilege which should never have been surrendered.

Inspired by lofty principles, the Constitution also remembered the poor and the sick and provided a system comparable with the Poor Law; the latter was also inspired, no doubt, by humanitarianism: if it has broken down and the French system survived, it is because, for reasons I hope to show further on, poverty has not increased in France.

The Constitution of 1791 did not long survive, not so much because it did not meet the views of the ever-growing extremist party, for little further advance was possible in the direction of Liberalism, as because it was intended to work with a king. After the trial and execution of Louis XVI, in January 1793, the instrument was void; for this reason the *Convention* remoulded the Constitution and, led mainly by Robespierre, passed a new law where the fury of independence led to the insertion of articles which cannot be looked upon as workable. This document still acknowledges the Supreme Being, and the greater part of it contains the same principles and is expressed in almost the same words as the first Constitution.

This Constitution emphasises the fact that no law may be brought to bear on an offence which was not formerly punishable, and makes an important declaration of which we find traces in modern French law: it limits the right of contract. The Constitution of 1793 forbids a man to sell himself or to undertake not to engage in any particular work; it should be understood that the spirit of the Constitution, as shown in other parts, was that this provision applied only to indefinite periods. Men had the right to limit their activities for a reasonable time but not for life, as might a serf under the old *régime*. The Constitution affirms the debt of

Society to its poorer members and binds it to supply them with work; here we find the dawning of the Socialistic idea and, in this article, we feel the influence of Robespierre, the meteor. To him also the Constitution owes the statement that "no man may usurp sovereignty without incurring the penalty of death." I in no wise quarrel with the action of those who executed Louis XVI, but I cannot help noting the grim contradiction of two articles, the one decreeing that no law shall be retroactive, the other, passed six months after the execution of the King, establishing the death penalty for the assumption of sovereignty. To conclude these brief remarks on the Constitution of 1793, I would quote the famous Article 35, drafted by the all-pervading Robespierre:—

> "When the Government violates the Rights of the People, Insurrection is for the People and for every Section of the People the most sacred and necessary of Rights."

This is a terrible prescription if it be taken literally, not so if it be understood as we, in this country, understand agitation. Be that as it may, the Constitution must be considered as having been acceptable to the nation, for it was submitted to it after a unanimous vote of the Convention with an extraordinary result: it received 1,801,918 votes, only 11,610 being cast against it. Thus, good or bad, and all democrats will call it good, the Constitution was supported by the people after a direct appeal.

After *La Terreur*, the Constitution was amended, but no new feature of great importance was introduced; the tendency was then to insert much irrele-

vant matter but, as it is mostly interesting, a few points may be noted. Special provision is made for State encouragement of invention, a practice which successive governments have not abandoned; another banished formally all the *émigrés* of the early days and confiscated their property. The execution of the document was then handed over to the *Directoire*, a committee of five, legislative power being vested in two houses, both elective. An appeal to the country again resulted in an enormous majority for the Constitution, 916,334 votes having been cast for it and only 41,892 against.

As might have been expected, the apparition of Bonaparte as First Consul resulted practically in a clean sweep of the revolutionary ideas; the Constitution vanished. Though General Bonaparte, in his first proclamation, professes fairly *sans-culotte* views, in fact, beyond the *habeas corpus* and the right to petition, nothing was left of the older systems. Finally, in 1804, Napoleon captures the machine and, for over ten years, there is in France no Constitution (as the French understand the term); all bends before the imperious will of the Emperor.

Louis XVIII was not cast in the Napoleonic mould; thus he found himself compelled to grant a charter, in which were embodied principles comparable with those of the Constitution of 1791; in fact, the situation was similar, as both monarchies were limited in power; thus the Bourbon had to accept the very principles which had proved the undoing of his brother. There is nothing of cardinal importance in the charter, except that the Roman Catholic Church is established permanently as the State religion kept up out of State funds. Curiously enough, the Reactionary government

of Louis-Philippe modified this very prescription, possibly because clerical support was already proving an old man of the sea. The Roman Catholic Church was no longer distinguished as the State Church, though it was still stipulated that its ministers alone should be supported by the nation.

In 1848 France is emancipated from nearly fifty years of Monarchic trammels and the Constitution of the Second Republic restates the constitutions of 1791 and 1793, taking the middle course between *Girondin* lukewarmness and *Jacobin* fury. Practically, its principles are those of the first Constitution: it reaffirms the *habeas corpus*, abolishes the death penalty for political offences and places education under the control of the State.

The Republic, as we know, was short-lived; after the *coup d'état* of 2nd December 1851, the referendum placed in the hands of Prince Louis-Napoléon practically dictatorial powers and, one year later, another emperor reigned over the French. Singularly enough, after the first referendum in 1851 and after the second, in 1852, the Imperial Government acknowledged as a basis the principles of 1789. No doubt the Emperor felt that no man could any longer ride the steed on the curb and, for eighteen years, he rode it on the snaffle successfully enough. Had the armies of France been victorious against Germany the Imperial *régime* might have survived; it was not particularly popular, but it was not seriously threatened as a *régime*. However, it fell and the Third and last Republic arose, phœnix-like, from the ashes of its predecessors. The new Constitution confined itself to the regulation of legislative and executive power but, as it is the *régime* under which

France is governed, we must devote more attention to it, particularly in view of its comparative antiquity.

It is one thing to put down on paper altruistic and noble principles and to establish rules under which a people will be well governed, but it is another and a very much more difficult thing to frame a working constitution which will embody the principles and make the rules applicable to practical needs. General statements are easy but, when we come to incorporate them into a system of government, an avalanche of detail often overwhelms them; thus they may disappear as effectually as did the principles of 1789 under the Second Empire which had nominally accepted them. But there comes a time when the people and their representatives know so exactly what they want that the discussion centres less round fundamental points than round trifling matters of wording. This was the case with the French Constitution known nowadays by its date, 1875. The document was not produced in a hurry; the National Assembly, convened immediately after the fall of the Empire, in September 1870, governed the country according to the principles of 1789 and 1848; there was no constitution and, if it be not contradictory to say so, France was ruled by a parliamentary dictature. The Assembly cleared away the wreckage of the Franco-German War, suppressed the riots in Paris and in the provinces, arranged for the payment of the indemnity to Germany, all this by means of the administrative machinery left behind by the First and Second Empires. These vital matters occupied its energies to the full, and it is perhaps well that constitution-making was not proceeded with amid the terrible scenes of disorder and insurrection that

followed the war, under the pressure of poverty and the eye of the invader.

However, this important matter was not lost sight of and, in November 1873, a commission of thirty members, publicly elected from among the representatives, was appointed to draft the Constitution of the Third Republic. It will be realised that the thirty did their work thoroughly, for they devoted to their task the whole of their time for fifteen months, so that the Constitution was passed on the 24th and 25th days of February 1875, the last portion being passed on the 16th of July 1875. In a sense it was a final draft and it has been accepted as such. None but trifling alterations were introduced in 1879 and in 1884; this fact, by the way, shows that the eminently practical turn of mind of the French had not died out: they were not deterred in the matter by the sentimental associations of the document and boldly altered that which had proved unworkable.

The Constitution of 1875 is not a very lengthy document and I should like to quote it *in extenso*, as I did in the case of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The text contains, however, a goodly amount of detail, the perusal of which might add a little to the reader's knowledge without being very useful as regards the understanding of the aims of the Constitution. The commission did its work carefully and regulated the powers of both the Executive and the Legislature very minutely; what we want to arrive at is not so much comprehensive knowledge of every provision as an accurate idea of the object of these provisions and of their working in a democratic state. For that reason I will abstain from quoting any unnecessary matter;

the entire text may be found in the latest edition of the Statute Book or *Code*, which can be purchased by the public.[1]

LAW PASSED ON THE 25TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 1875

Article 1. Legislative power is exercised by two assemblies: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

The Chamber of Deputies is elected by manhood suffrage under the conditions fixed by the electoral law.

The composition, method of election and functions of the Senate will be regulated by a special law.

Article 2. The President of the Republic is elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies convened as a National Assembly.

He is elected for seven years. He may be re-elected.

Article 3. The President of the Republic may initiate legislation in the same manner

[1] The complete statute law of France can be purchased for 6s.; truly a remarkably low price.

as members of both Houses. He promulgates the laws after they have been passed by the two Houses; he superintends and ensures their execution.

He controls military power.

He controls nominations to all civil and military posts.

He presides at national ceremonies; he receives the credentials of envoys and ambassadors of foreign powers.

All decrees of the President of the Republic must be countersigned by a Minister.

Article 5. The President of the Republic may, with the approval of the Senate, dissolve the Chamber of Deputies before its mandate have legally expired.

Article 6. Ministers are jointly responsible to both Houses for the general policy of the Government and individually for their personal acts.

The President of the Republic cannot be held responsible except in case of high treason.

Article 8. The Republican form of the government cannot be revised. Members

of families that have reigned in France are not eligible for the office of President of the Republic.

LAW PASSED ON THE 24TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 1875[1]

Article 1. The Senate is composed of three hundred members: two hundred and twenty-five are elected by the *départements*[2] and seventy-five by the National Assembly.[3]

Article 3. No man may be a Senator if he be not a Frenchman aged at least forty years and in possession of his civil and political rights.

Article 4. The Senators are elected by the *départements* and colonies by an absolute majority and, when necessary, by list voting, through an electoral college meeting at the *chef-lieu*[4] of the *département* or colony and comprising:

[1] Articles 1 to 7 are separated from the Constitution since 1884, but this does not detract from their importance.

[2] Say "county."

[3] Amended 1884. "Life" Senators retained their seats, but these were allotted to the *départements*, which elect new members as vacancies occur through decease or resignation of the nominated Senators.

[4] Seat of administrative and executive power in each *département*.

1. The Deputies;
2. The *Conseillers Généraux*;[1]
3. The *Conseillers d'Arrondissement*;
4. The delegates elected at the rate of one[3] for every *Conseil Municipal*[4] by the electors of the *Commune*.[5]

Article 6. The Senators elected by the *départements* and colonies are chosen for nine years, one-third of their number retiring every three years.

Article 7. The Senators elected by the National Assembly are nominated for life. Should a seat fall vacant through decease, resignation or any other cause, the Senate shall co-opt a new member within two months.[6]

Article 8. The Senate possesses, equally with the Chamber of Deputies, the right to propose and to pass laws. However, matters relating to finance must, in the first place, be presented to and passed by the Chamber of Deputies.

[1] Say "county councillors."
[2] Say "borough" or "town" councillors.
[3] Amended in 1884. Parishes now elect from one to twenty-four delegates (Paris thirty), according to the size of the council.
[4] Say "parish council."
[5] Say "parish."
[6] Void since 1884.

Article 9. The Senate may be constituted into a court of justice for the purpose of trying either the President of the Republic or ministers, and of sitting in judgment over those who may attempt the security of the State.

LAW PASSED ON THE 16TH DAY OF JULY 1875

Article 1. The two Houses shall be in session for at least five months in every year. Their respective sessions begin and end on the same dates.

Article 2. The President of the Republic proclaims the date of the closure of the session. He may hold an extraordinary session. He shall be compelled to do so if required during the recess by the majority of the members composing each House. The President may adjourn the Houses, but the period of adjournment shall not exceed one month, nor shall an adjournment take place more than twice during the same session.

Article 5. The sittings of the Senate

and of the Chamber of Deputies are public. However, each House may constitute itself in secret committee if required to by a certain number of members, as fixed by the rules of the House.

Article 6. The President of the Republic communicates with the Houses by means of messages which are read from the rostrum by a Minister.

Ministers have access to both Houses and shall be heard whenever they demand it.

Article 7. Within the period fixed for the promulgation of a law, the President of the Republic may, by means of a message stating the grounds for his action, request both Houses to discuss it afresh, which request cannot be declined.

Article 8. The President of the Republic discusses and ratifies treaties. He makes these known to both Houses as soon as is compatible with the interests and security of the State. Treaties fixing the terms of peace, commercial treaties and such treaties as may affect the finances of the State, the personal status and rights of property of

French citizens resident abroad, shall not take effect until they have been passed by both Houses. No cession, exchange or annexation of territory can be completed until a law has been passed to that effect.

Article 9. The President of the Republic cannot declare war without the previous consent of both Houses.

Article 12. The President of the Republic cannot be impeached by any but the Chamber of Deputies; he cannot be tried by any but the Senate.

Ministers may be impeached by the Chamber of Deputies for crimes committed by them and connected with their office. In this case, they are tried by the Senate.

The Senate may be constituted as a court of justice by a decree of the President of the Republic, passed by a Cabinet Council, for the purpose of trying any person charged with an attempt against the security of the State.

Article 13. No member of either House may be prosecuted or sued for opinions he may have voiced or votes he may have cast while exercising his functions.

Article 14. No member of either House may, while either House is in session, be prosecuted or arrested, under criminal law or police regulations, without the consent of the House of which he is a member, except he be arrested in the act. The detention or imprisonment of a member of either House shall be suspended during the whole of the session if the House demands it.

CHAPTER V

THE CONSTITUTION AND THE GOVERNMENT

THE three laws quoted at the end of the foregoing chapter embody the essential principles of the Constitution; to have given them *in extenso* would not have been an encroachment on the space at my disposal, but the articles omitted refer mainly to dates on which the Houses must be called together and to delays allowable under certain circumstances. To give such details as these would not have contributed to the easy understanding of what is really a simple system. It is, however, a foreign system and, for that reason alone, it is necessary to elucidate a few points that bear upon novel institutions. Moreover, as these rules, though more precise than any declaration, do not give an adequate idea of the mechanism by means of which they are applied, it becomes important to add a few details with reference to matters electoral and general which have been settled subsequently to the passing of the organic laws.

The Chamber of Deputies is the democratic House, in this sense that its members are in closer personal contact with the electors than are the Senators. The object of the Constitution is to make the House democratic and easily accessible to all classes and, to this

effect, it has imposed no irksome restrictions on membership. Singularly enough, though the Constitution originally fixed with some minuteness the conditions under which a citizen could be elected a Senator, it was dumb as regards Deputies, so that the election of the latter had to be provided for by special electoral laws. At the present time, no citizen may be a Deputy who is not twenty-five years of age, French, in possession of his civil and political rights and able to prove that he has completed his military service. As regards the latter condition, it does not, of course, apply to those who have been rejected as physically unfit, though, under the military laws now in force, their number be very small.[1]

A member, to be legally elected, must aggregate the absolute majority of votes, i.e. over one-half of the votes polled. Should he fail to do so, a second ballot takes place, when the leader of the poll is declared elected, whatever be the support he may have received. In practice, certain parties retire in favour of one another according to the working alliances that are necessary under a *régime* of coalition governments; should a member be unopposed, constitutionally the poll should be taken and the member elected, however few votes he may have received, but there are few instances of such cases, a fact easily explained by the substantial salary paid to members. Opinions may differ as to the advantages of the second ballot; it has not been necessary to include it, up to the present, in the British system, because there were only two parties. Ever since the Home Rule split it has, however, been a question of some importance; after the fall of Mr. Gladstone,

[1] The lame and the weakly are not exempted but are drafted into military offices, factories, etc.

Liberal Unionists were placed in the unpleasant position of having to vote for a Liberal, a potential home-ruler, or for a Conservative, with most of whose opinions theirs necessarily clashed. In later years, the situation has been complicated by a similar split in Unionist ranks on the Tariff Reform question and by the apparition of Labour on the political horizon as an opponent of even the Extreme Radicals. At the present time, three-cornered contests are frequent and are usually productive of results obviously unsatisfactory to the majority of the electorate. Whether we find two Unionists splitting the Conservative vote on Tariff Reform or Liberal and Labour candidates splitting the advanced vote, the results are equally unpleasing from the point of view of common sense and of fair play.

Leaving aside the question of the second ballot, we see that any citizen who fulfils the above conditions, and they are the immense majority, may become a Deputy for a renewable period of four years. This would, however, be delusive as far as democracy is concerned if the law had not instituted payment of members, which alone enables the representatives of the poor to accept a mandate. The salary is substantial, £600 a year, members of both Houses being on the same footing, but it is not excessive in view of the fact that Deputies must almost of necessity reside in Paris, where the cost of living in a protected country is enhanced by living in a protected town. Moreover, election expenses must be taken into account and, between elections, a constituency looks to its member for monetary assistance for various objects; any who have experience of the question in Great Britain will understand that this is not a trifling matter.

It will be seen from the foregoing that every facility is given for the most democratic development; the question of the payment of members is, of course, the most important one, as the most democratic franchise in the world will not help men into parliament if they have neither salary nor private means. In the British Parliament, it is true that the majority of the members follow some business or profession, but they are usually men of means whose partners conduct their business whilst they deal with politics. In a sense, they are professional legislators, and it is in the nature of things that they cannot hope to devote themselves to business by day and find time and energy to prepare the speeches they deliver in the House by night. The French law-maker is a man of a different stamp, though he is also a professional; he does not usually engage in business or any other occupation, but devotes himself entirely to politics. His salary enables him to live and the precariousness of his position makes him truly representative of his constituents.

It is not desirable that a man should be paid directly by the electors, as is the case in Great Britain with the Labour member, as he has a tendency to become a machine, to lose all independence of opinion. On the other hand, it is not desirable that popular representatives should be very rich men, able to disregard utterly the wishes of constituents to whom they are not linked by the power of the purse. In the first case there is no leader, in the second, no real following. From this point of view, therefore, the French system appears superior, for it adopts the middle course of making the member dependent upon the State and yet not subservient to a small body of men. Thus the Chamber

of Deputies is made accessible to all citizens, and they are enabled to take their own line within the limits their prudence may dictate.

The Constitution, having thus ensured that the representatives shall be of any class that the electorate may desire, has provided through special laws for the enfranchising of the greatest possible number of citizens. The Constitution specifies that every citizen shall have a vote, irrespective of any property qualification, and only one vote, in however many districts he may have interests. None are excluded from the poll except convicted felons, who have, by the fact of their conviction, lost their political rights, chronic drunkards, the insane and the feeble-minded. The troops are also excluded, as it is thought unwise to sow political dissension amongst them, in the interests of discipline and of the security of the State. The democratic character of the House is thus intensified by the still more democratic character of the electorate. Not only does the French law avoid the innumerable complications of our electoral system, such as householder's, occupier's, lodger's franchise, etc., by giving every man a vote, but it provides for an adjustment of power by limiting every citizen to one vote, to be cast in the constituency in which he has been resident for the six months preceding the election, or in one of those where he may have a residence; but in one only.

The constituency being the *arrondissement*, which was originally created as an administrative portion of the *département* and is itself divided into *communes*, the establishment of the roll is a simple matter. Whereas in Great Britain there is no connection between parishes and constituencies and special machinery is required, in

France the lists are prepared in each *commune* and revised annually. There is no question of rival election agents struggling for votes, of claims and objections, of hair-splitting decisions by the revising barrister. In each *commune* a mixed committee of three, comprising the *maire*,[1] an official delegate and a municipal delegate, revises the list every year and includes in it all the men aged twenty-one who have been resident in the *commune* for six months. It is noteworthy, with regard to plural voting, that no new name may be entered without evidence having been produced to show that it has been erased from the lists of the previous place of residence. It is unnecessary to sing the praises of methods so just, so simple and so cheap.

The French system is also intended to cope with inequalities in the value of votes. It is notorious that this can never be done absolutely, even by means of automatic redistribution. It is true that in the British colonies, where population is sparse and sedentary, automatic redistribution is not too complex a matter (and even there the roll may take six months to a year to prepare) but, in thickly populated centres, it is a lengthy and costly process. As is well known, the British system is thoroughly out of date and the Redistribution Act, 1885, did not improve it much. Of the members now sitting, one was returned by 45,000[2] electors and another by 1500, whilst a great many instances can be quoted where one member represents ten times more voters than another. To a certain extent this is also the case in France; not only was it found neces-

[1] The equivalent of the French *maire* is not necessarily a mayor; the position is usually that of the chairman of a Parish Council.

[2] Romford about 50,000 in 1908.

sary to stretch a point as regards groups exceeding half the population entitled to a member, but rural emigration has set in to a certain extent and, in a few districts it has unfairly influenced the attribution of members. However, the evil is a minor one, because the population neither increases nor decreases to any great extent, so that representation is, on the whole, sufficiently accurate. At any rate, few cases have come to light where a member was returned by more than treble the number of electors who are endowed with another representative. This compares very favourably with the case quoted above (Romford 45,000 and Kilkenny 1500), where the one electorate is thirty times larger than the other. The reason is that the French did not give way to the sentimental tendencies of the British, which induced the latter to preserve the representation of pocket boroughs and dead market towns, but boldly marked out equal fractions on the map, allotting members in strict equity. Moreover, whilst redistribution has always been hampered in Great Britain and has always been gerrymandered in the name of tradition, the French made a clean sweep of the dead past and started on common-sense lines. The distribution is not perfect, because the population may vary slightly and provoke a local upheaval; but in practice this is not the case. For instance, if an *arrondissement* had 101,000 inhabitants it would return two members; if the population were to decrease by, say, 1500, it would thenceforth return only one; but these cases are rare: the test of a system is not that which might happen, but that which does happen over a reasonable period.

Unprejudiced consideration of the foregoing must inevitably result in a favourable verdict for the French

system as a whole. It is fair because it aims at giving every vote the same value; it is notoriously cheap and, above all, it is elastic; no debatable Redistribution Acts are needed to alter the boundaries of the constituencies: the Census alone regulates the question. The opposition to the most elementary reforms that confronts us in this country is amazing; manhood suffrage is opposed because it leads to adult suffrage and it is therefore argued that women must first of all be enfranchised on the same terms as men before our methods are modified; thus we are forbidden to touch the system. On the other hand, if woman's suffrage is proposed, it is at once argued that the present system must first of all be brought up to date! There is but one word for such tactics: they are dishonest.

If I may be allowed to digress, I would mention that an agitation for woman's suffrage is beginning to make itself felt in France; it is far from having attained the degree of intensity that it has reached in Great Britain, but, singularly enough, it may succeed in France before it does so in this country, owing to the pronounced Socialist tendency of modern French Parliaments, who are inclined to favour adult suffrage, and owing also to the potency of feminine influence in France, which is analysed in another chapter.

Before treating of the composition of the Senate, our attention must be drawn to the fact that the Chamber of Deputies has a prior right of criticism as regards the Budget and laws of finance in general. At first sight, this may seem to bring the Chamber of Deputies into line with the House of Commons, but the privilege, though inspired with the same spirit, is differently applied. From time immemorial the Commons have had

the monopoly of money votes; even in medieval days, as a last resource, French kings have had to deal with the States-General when large sums were needed. These assemblies comprised representatives of all classes and were an embryonic form of parliament; limited as was their scope, they occasionally made the sovereign feel their power, so that their political heirs naturally came into possession of a jealously guarded privilege. But whereas, in Great Britain, in view of the fact that the Second Chamber is not democratic, the House of Commons possesses in practice the sole right of considering laws of finance, in France, where the Senate is an elected body, the Chamber of Deputies has only a *prior* right of criticism. The law, having been passed by the Deputies, must also be passed by the Senators, who have, equally with the former, the right to modify it as they may think fit; the new provisions are then returned to the Chamber of Deputies, which may decline to accept the alterations. In theory the two Houses must agree; should they be unable to do so, even after a dissolution, the case would have to be decided by special measures: these have yet to be invented because, in practice, this never happens; in most cases a compromise is effected and, should it be impossible, the Senate yields.

There is another difference as regards this question; whereas, in the House of Commons, credits cannot be created but the Budget must be passed or rejected unaltered, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate both have the right to create and to suppress appropriations. This privilege is certainly not an unmixed blessing, for a considerable amount of log-rolling is always taking place; in this respect the British system

appears superior, as it prevents members from currying favour with their constituencies at the expense of the Exchequer and enables the latter to restrict the outlay of public funds. It needs a very masterful man to defend the Budget; according to Thiers, to do this thoroughly a minister must display "ferocity"; according to Bismarck, the Chancellor of the Exchequer should be "as a savage mastiff squatting in front of the public chest." As most Chancellors are neither Thiers nor Bismarcks, a restriction of this privilege of French members should be viewed with favour; reform is, however, unlikely as members are unwilling to abandon such valuable means of electoral propaganda.

The foregoing rapid survey of the powers of the Chamber of Deputies leads us naturally to a similar study of the privileges of the Senate. The creation of this body was evidence of singular wisdom, given the circumstances under which the Third Republic came into being; recovering from a terrible war, emancipated from the imperial yoke, it needed coolness and common sense not to entrust the destinies of the nation to a single democratic assembly. The French are, however, a practical people with a gift for administration, and the National Assembly foresaw that they would at once detect the dangers of a single-chamber system; for this reason the Senate was created at the same time as the Chamber of Deputies and, though the people have from time to time grumbled at the institution, its suppression or even substantial modification has rarely been proposed seriously.

All who are interested in politics must, at the present time, be well posted as regards the question of "One House or Two?" The more hot-blooded section of the

democratic party apparently supports the single-house system, as is natural enough from an extremist's point of view. Let them, however, consider for a moment that France, that most democratic of nations, did not hesitate, in the very heat of reaction from absolutism, to establish a Second Chamber on a constitutional basis.

A Second Chamber appears to be a necessity, and it should be slightly more conservative than the First; it is not suggested that the Second Chamber should be undemocratic: it should merely be less advanced than the First. In the Lower House we want the youth and energy of the nation, the ideas and the ideals; in the Upper House we want a steadying influence, a means of curbing the Government team when it looks like getting out of hand. We do not want a Second Chamber to block legislation or to oppose the will of the people, but we want a cautious body which will not allow the Executive to be rushed into danger by an over-enthusiastic Lower House.

To create such a chamber is no easy matter: either it will be undemocratic and unprogressive or it will not serve the purpose for which it was instituted, because its composition will be similar to that of the Lower House. In the former case it will fall into discredit and, in the latter, it will be useless. Keeping this well in mind, the legislators of 1875 have evolved as good a system as can be conceived; up to the present it has worked smoothly and efficiently. With this object in view, the Constitution laid down restrictions with regard to the personality of the members and the status of the electorate; side by side with a house elected by manhood suffrage, it instituted a house elected by restricted suffrage. Originally it was suggested that

the Upper House should be divided into classes, a proposal which was, of course, scouted by the Republican party; it was also suggested that a property qualification should be introduced, but this provision also naturally failed to find favour in the eyes of the French Radicals. After protracted discussion, the conditions imposed in Articles 3 and 4 of the law of the 24th February 1875 were unanimously accepted.

As regards the selection of candidates, it will be remembered that, inferentially, any man entitled to become a Deputy may become a Senator, provided that he have attained the age of forty. Here we detect at once the motive of the legislator; the object of the provision is the obtention of a body of mature and sober men. The age of forty being a minimum, the natural result is that the average age of Senators is far greater. Men do not usually wait until that time to enter politics; should they be members of the Lower House, they are not likely to leave it and its opportunities at an age when their fighting powers are at their best. As a result, candidates for senatorial honours are either men who have had lengthy parliamentary experience or laymen who have made their mark in science, history or the professions. In either case they are likely to be steady and cool, less given to enthusiasm than younger men and eminently fitted for the rôle of moderator. By means of this provision, the Constitution ensured that the Upper House would be preserved from the ill-regulated ardour of youth but, as it did not intend to install in high places a retrogressive body, it edicted that members must be elected. Leaving aside the body of "life" Senators, whose numbers have shrunk from seventy-five to about a dozen and the

youngest of whom is not likely to live twenty years, we find that the democratic character of the House has been ensured, for the remaining seats are occupied by elected members; these will amount to three hundred when the remaining "life" Senators disappear, after which there will no longer be a trace of nomination or co-option in the French legislative system.

In another direction, we are also confronted by the intention of the legislator who wished the Upper House to be "Upper" in its true sense. Keeping in mind democratic principles, he laid down that a special electorate should be invested with the power of choosing representatives. In order to retain contact with the people, it was decided that their elect alone should have a vote; by these means a superior class of voter was secured. It may be argued that county or other councillors are not necessarily the salt of the people but it may be taken for granted that the vast majority are men of judgment, education and substance. Restricted suffrage and property qualifications are not good things to be governed by, but an infusion of the former element acts as an excellent tonic for the body electoral.

Thus we find the electorate composed, as stated in Article 4, of

(*a*) Men who have been elected by the people, such as county, town or borough councillors;

(*b*) Men who represent each parish (*commune*) for the special purpose of electing a Senator.

The first section comprises the chosen class; the second provides the democratic element. Whether this system be good or bad, I leave the reader to decide finally; all that need be added is that the Senate has

lived up to constitutional expectations. For years it acted as a restraint on hasty legislation, but it did not impede progress; as the people grew more advanced the Senate followed suit and remained in sympathy with them. For nearly forty years it has retained its position in the political system without incurring the dislike of the people, which is no small achievement for a constitutional wet blanket.

We must note, with reference to Article 9 of the law, the shadowy but curious resemblance of the British and the French Upper Houses. In both countries it has been felt that a high authority should be held in reserve to try cases which would be beyond the jurisdiction of ordinary courts. The similarity is only shadowy, as the House of Lords is not itself called upon to try these cases, which are purely private, but must delegate its power to specialist peers, whereas the Senate can only try political crimes of the first magnitude. However, we must note that, in both cases, judicial power has been conferred upon the highest legislative authority in the land. According to Article 9, the Senate has the power to try for high treason the President of the Republic, ministers or other persons, after they have been indicted by the Chamber of Deputies. In this case the Senate is constituted into a court of justice for a single occasion and there is, of course, no appeal from its verdict. Such trials are very uncommon; of late years, this judicial instrument has only once been set in motion, viz. against M. Paul Déroulède and his supporters, whose plot has been mentioned in another chapter.

Before dealing with the status of the Executive, it should be noted that the Constitution provides both

Deputies and Senators for the colonies. This is interesting in view of the suggestion that colonial representatives should be admitted into what would then really be an Imperial British Parliament. The problem is a difficult one, as colonial members must necessarily be in a minority; should they be allowed a voice in the control of home affairs, home politicians must be allowed to take part in colonial business. Friction would inevitably result and, apart from sentiment, no useful purpose would apparently be served. This is hardly the case in France, where the colonies, except Algeria, are either unimportant or practically devoid of white inhabitants. The French have no liking for devolution of power and have centralised in Paris the administration of their colonies; moreover, bureaucracy is all-powerful in the oversea dominions, so that the inclusion of Deputies and Senators elected by them does not to any degree modify the position. If the colonies were peopled by great white races, as is the case with those of Great Britain, the situation would be dangerous and might resolve itself in troubles similar to those that brought about the insurrection of our North American Colonies; as it is, this modified form of crown-colony government appears to work perfectly smoothly.

To this short survey of the respective powers of the two Houses must be appended a few details concerning the privileges and obligations of the President of the Republic. There is an idea abroad, particularly in this country, that the head of the State in France is a lay-figure, a mouthpiece for ministers; this is no doubt due to the fact that the President is not responsible for his decrees, ministers alone being liable to be called to account for them. If a man is devoid of responsibility

he is usually devoid of power, or should be: that is severe logic but, like most perfectly logical conclusions, it is not practically applied. I do not contend that the President of the French Republic is an autocrat of the familiar German or Russian type, nor even that he enjoys the power wielded by, say, the President of the United States of America, but he is endowed with constitutional powers sufficient to make him an important protagonist on the platform of government, should he choose to exercise them. Such men as Marshal MacMahon and, to a certain extent, M. Félix Faure, did not hesitate to act, and, should the present head of the State choose to make use of his prerogatives, if he spoke for and with the people he would in all likelihood gain the popularity that is ever the reward of courage.

The French usually respect the President and often refer to him as "the first magistrate of the Republic," which is erroneous but complimentary. They are no lovers of the pomp of courts and, for that reason, have allotted to him only £48,000 per annum, including the maintenance of his palace in Paris and of his country seat at Rambouillet; on the other hand, they invariably supply him with an escort, on official occasions, and gather in their thousands wherever he is likely to be present. A popular President is a very important man indeed, and a powerful one may seriously influence the progress of legislation.

The powers of the President are definitely laid down and limited in the Constitution; so clearly is this done that a few words on the subject will suffice. A very important prerogative is his right to initiate legislation; at first sight it may be argued that it is singular to find the

Executive intruding on the preserves of the Legislature, but it is less so when we remember that the President is invariably a Deputy or a Senator (though the Constitution does not specify this) and that, therefore, he cannot lose the right to vote or to initiate legislation that has been conferred upon him by his constituents. Indeed, under the circumstances, his privilege is comparable with that of an executive Minister, who preserves both these rights. Here, already, we are confronted with an important privilege, for the influential position of the President and the backing he may acquire in the country might enable him to carry a law through in the teeth of ministerial opposition ; it should be said that, in practice, the President never dreams of assuming this attitude.

The rights of pardoning malefactors, of nominating civil and military officials and of presiding at all state ceremonies are the natural perquisites of executive power; all these the President has. It is true that every one of his decrees must be countersigned by a Minister, in practice the Minister in charge of the matter that is in question, but it is also true that he can no more be compelled to do any particular act, other than the promulgation of a law, than can the Crown in Great Britain. Should a conflict arise, either between himself and the Legislature or between the two Houses, the President has in hand an effective instrument : he can dissolve Parliament and bring about new elections or he may adjourn the sittings for one month at a time, twice during a single session. Those are important powers and, as has already been said, President MacMahon made use of them. If we add to them the right to demand rediscussion of any law that has not yet been promulgated by him and that of pre-

paring and negotiating treaties, we find that, instead of a dummy, we have an influential and powerful official at the head of the French State. Any other system would have been repugnant to the nation ; democratic as it certainly is, it favours centralisation, which could never be attained if the Executive were weak. The position of the French President is, in many respects, similar to that of a constitutional monarch (contradictory as the adjective and the substantive may be), except that the system is cheaper and that it does not suffer from the class evils with which monarchy is more or less bound up. In a sense, the President is more powerful than a king, as he has behind him the votes of the people ; whereas a popular king enjoys immense influence for good or evil, an unpopular king can only preserve his throne by the power of the bayonet. Popular or unpopular, the President is the elect of the people and it is hardly conceivable that he could be overturned by any hostile combination.

Another embodiment of executive power is to be found in the Ministers. Their status does not in any notable respect differ from that of British Ministers. The Premier is selected by the President from among the men who can command a majority in both Houses, as he is in Great Britain by the King; Ministers are jointly responsible for Government measures and resign when in a minority on a vote of confidence or an important measure, as is the case in this country. Indeed, all that need be mentioned is that any Cabinet Minister has access to both Houses, even if he be a member of neither. This is a noteworthy fact, in view of the necessity under which a British Prime Minister is to ensure the representation of every important depart-

ment in Lords and Commons by means of members of both Houses. As a result, valuable men may be left out of the Cabinet, because Ministers have not got access to both Houses and, therefore, both must be drawn upon. It should also be noted that the French system allows of the inclusion of men who are not members of either House; this widens the field of selection and enables the Premier to secure the services of experts, particularly of eminent soldiers and sailors.

Before closing this survey of the practical working of the French Constitution, it should be pointed out that French ministries are unstable and that this instability, which British eyes look upon with disfavour, is due to the system of coalition governments. The French are a Radical nation and, as a result, are naturally inclined to differ upon means, however well they may be agreed upon ends; in the same manner as Radical majorities in Great Britain are always liable to break up at a moment's notice, because their component parts think for themselves and do not fear to act, French majorities are always ready to discard a Minister or a Cabinet as soon as his policy no longer tallies with theirs. For that reason the "Bloc" is never very solid, except on national questions; I hold no brief for French systems and admit the inherent weakness of coalition governments. I am not prepared to admit, on the other hand, that party government is superior; in the first case we find colourless policy and lack of continuity, in the second obtuseness and unintelligent opposition. As, however, in cases of national emergency, such as the question of Church and State, we find that successive coalition governments have now

been in power for some ten years without modifying their political attitude very much, we are driven to admit that the system can be made to work smoothly; under ordinary circumstances, coalition governments are not very strong but in times of stress they are all-powerful. Party government, on the other hand, is always vigorous but it is often stupid.

This digression being at an end, I must close this long though necessary survey of the French Constitution and its working; it extends over several chapters and they are none too many, for a bulky volume could easily be devoted to the subject. I do not, however, desire to enter into the details of French local administration; they can be found in special legal and economic text-books. The object of the present work is not to marshal an imposing array of facts and figures, but to show in as a clear a light as possible the basic principles of French government and French ideas; I want to dispel prejudice rather than impart information, to redress the balance where it is faulty and to show both the uncompromising Briton and the "pessimist" Briton that French systems are sober, sound and logical, inspired throughout by common regard for the elementary principles of humanity, justice and mercy.

CHAPTER VI

REACTION

THE British race has, on the whole, been fortunate in its kings. This is probably the reason for the regret so frequently expressed when reference is made to the Republican form of government in France. Whether or not the British are naturally in favour of personal government is open to question when we recall the historic attitude of the Commons, their occasional truculence and their habitual dignity. Be that as it may, loyalty to the royal line is the rule in this country, with an explicit or implied proviso that private liberties shall be respected. If we knew more exactly what real freedom is, we should have a more exact idea of what is meant by a "free country." The British and the Americans alike brag of their freedom, and both races look upon themselves as ideal examples of independence. Yet British liberty and American liberty are very different things, and are qualified by very different evils—possibly political in the first case and possibly financial in the second. Thus we find two nations under vastly dissimilar systems preferring the same claim.

We need not pursue the idea further. But such thoughts naturally arise when one hears it said that the French enjoy no more liberty than we do and sometimes that the French were no gainers when they substituted

Republican for Monarchic rule. This, however, is not the standpoint from which criticisms are levelled at the French system; there is no question of more or less liberty but of a vague liking for a certain form of government. Modify it as much as may be desired, personal rule has certain characteristics which cannot be divorced from it, however much it may be hedged in by constitutional safeguards against absolutism. More or less intense militarism, pageantry and caste differences are inherent to Monarchic forms of government, and these particular characteristics are clearly popular with the majority of the British race.

It is with regard to these externals of royalty that opinions are expressed, root principles of government being as a rule left aside, because it is well known that a Liberal Monarchy and a hide-bound Republic may be productive of analogous political results. The British are loyal to their kings, and it is unlikely that any but a small section would be willing to substitute another *régime* for the present one. This is in great part, no doubt, due to the idiosyncrasy of the born Briton, who clings to an institution because it is old, if for no other reason. Conservatism is hardly a party tendency; it is practically a national trait. Men are often as obstinately "Radical" as they are obstinately "Tory," and that for no particular reason. In the same way they cling to Monarchic rule without questioning it, because it seems to work smoothly and has never been oppressive in itself; the majority of the electors being unobservant and not given to correlating cause with its effect, they accept the accomplished fact and look askance at any system foreign to accepted ideas. Thus the French Republic is not favourably regarded because

Great Britain is a Monarchy, and there is every chance that, if Great Britain were a Republic and France a Monarchy, the case would be the same.

To innate conservatism in the first place, we can trace a portion of the regret so often expressed by the British middle classes that the French people thought fit to alter their system: all changes are odious for a very long time, until at least their eruptive origin has been forgotten. There are, however, other reasons for disapproving of the Republic itself, apart from the fact that it is a new-comer, and one of those that are most frequently heard is that a Republic has "no head." Liberty-loving as they probably are at heart, the British cling to the idea that it is essential to have a leader, effective or nominal; they may strip him of the elementary attributes of leadership, but they will insist on preserving the pious fiction that they are controlled by a master hand. The idea of "King People" makes no true appeal for them, in this sense that they are anxious enough for the People to be King, but they will not hear of his ascending the throne. To be governed by an abstraction is not attractive to them: they must have a man to look up to, a statue on a pedestal to admire and to bow to. Hero worship is a national characteristic in Great Britain, from schoolroom to Parliament, and the craving for it must be satisfied. If there be a hero, then let him be cheered by the mob; if there be no hero, then let us bow to the scion of an illustrious race; such appears to be the reasoning of the mass.

I do not wish again to compare Monarchic and Republican *régimes;* Monarchy is not liberty, but are all men, are even the majority of them, fit to be free?

King People is a noble sound, but is the People worthy of the purple? If all men, or the bulk of them, were educated, thoughtful and open-minded, personal rule would be ridiculous; in the present state of things one is inclined to wonder whether they are not too free as they are. Whether the conferring of liberty makes a man more fit to use it is not certain, but to enfranchise him is often worth the risk; if side issues, such as the creation of an aristocracy, did not influence the problem, it would be impossible for the unprejudiced to form a clear opinion: on these side issues the differences arise and men are marshalled into their respective camps without giving much consideration to the banners that float above them. Are there, however, good grounds for the contention that the French Republic has no "head"? It would be easy to put the previous question to the critic and request him to prove that the British Empire has a "head" in the sense that Germany has, but such a course is unnecessary. A state has or has not a "head," according to the character of the man who nominally occupies the position; regalia are not evidences of power, they are only its attributes. A king uncrowned is still a king and a weakling seated on high is still a weakling; thus we find that Republican rule has not only as good a chance as a Monarchy of producing a true head of the state, but a better one, for a Monarchic system must accept that which kingly birth gives it, whereas the Republic can choose its most eminent and forceful man. It would be absurd to contend that the occupants of certain thrones, either shorn of their power or the sport of favourites, the butt of conspirators and the prey of foreign bankers, are in any sense to be compared as regards influence and power with such

magnificent dictators as President Roosevelt or President Diaz.

It is not given to every state and to every period to produce a Diaz or a Roosevelt, any more than it is given to all dynasties to produce a William the Conqueror, a Peter the Great or a Napoleon; this must not be forgotten if we wish to refute satisfactorily the arguments of the Monarchist. What is the position when the occupant of the throne is not a forceful man, such a man, in short, that, had he not inherited his title, the people would have invested him with it? It is analogous for the thoughtful man, however different it may appear; the French presidents have none of them, except M. Thiers, been men of outstanding ability, though they were every one men worthy of popular respect; as a rule they have been selected because they were acceptable to a majority, not because they compelled a majority. Thus, they did not realise the conditions enounced in the postulatum to these remarks, namely, that they should be "heads" because they were naturally fit to be so. In this case another force steps in; even the Roosevelts and the Diaz do not govern by pure personal magnetism; behind them is the power of the people. They dominate their master and cause it by sheer force of character to become their servant, but they do not enslave it for ever, nor do they escape the animosity of an energetic minority; behind the power of the man there is the power of the nation; without the nation the man would be nothing; without the man the nation would be as great a force.

When the occupant of the presidential chair is not a man of outstanding ability, when he has no reserves of strength for an emergency, he still possesses the power

that the nation has given him; he may not be a leader, but he is the chosen of the people, the man on whom they have conferred a supreme honour; above all things he is unique. There may be but one King, but there is also but one President; the first holds his position with the approval of the people, the latter by the will of the people; the President passes while the King remains, but Kings die and Presidents change and long or short periods of leadership do not affect the question. All power is vested in the people; whether it be forced into acknowledging a conqueror and accepting the suzerainty of his line, whether it be cajoled into recognising the leadership of an artful and ambitious man or whether it deliberately select a chief, temporary or permanent, the people alone possesses the privilege of government, the right to delegate it and the power to alter its form. Thus, whoever the ruler may be, as he is necessarily the trustee of the rights of the nation, it is practically immaterial whether he be selected or not, for by the will of the people alone shall he rule.

The influence of the leader may be immense, though it is often insignificant enough; this is hardly recognised by the detractors of the Republican *régime*, who lay to its charge another evil as formidable as the absence of a "head"; they state that Republicanism spells lack of culture and that France has lost much in discarding her Kings and their court. It cannot be denied that a Monarch has in himself an immense capacity for good work in this direction; his great prestige, the fact that many of his subjects watch his every action, follow his lead and even go so far as to imitate his style of dress, all tend to give him the power of influencing if not of guiding the times in

which he lives. A King who is a lover of the arts and of culture in general can develop an atmosphere which may slowly diffuse itself through the entire body politic; he may be a refining, a civilising factor. This, we find, has been the case in all countries, in Great Britain under the Stuarts, in France under practically all the Kings from 1500 to 1750, and even in Prussia in the eighteenth century; conversely we find the influence dormant under the Georges, as we do under the Bourbons of the nineteenth century. No one will deny the greatness of the reign of Louis XIV, for instance: it is the Augustan period of the arts in Europe; yet it is permissible to say that a Republican system does not exclude the fostering of culture. A King can extend valuable patronage to the arts; in addition to his personal influence he has at his disposal large sums of money and social distinctions of all sorts; his court will be all the more brilliant if it include men of learning as well as the scions of his nobles; the protection thus extended to the national brain will enable it to produce its noblest fruits. A Republic has no court, but it has all the power that a King possesses in this respect; it can grant pensions to individuals, subsidies to institutions and, far better than can a Monarch, develop in its schools and universities dormant talent of which the ruler could never have been cognisant.

The foregoing are purely general points; the charge is specific and absolutely baseless. It is not contended that, at the present time, France possesses an *élite* comparable with that which honoured the court of François I, but is the Republic responsible? Is the German Government answerable for there being no Wagner, the British Government for there being no

Shakespeare? None will assert it, and yet it is suggested that France is not what it was and that the Republic has killed the arts. Most emphatically, this is untrue; the roll of honour of the French race has been inscribed during the last thirty years with many names that will not be forgotten; is it necessary to mention Massenet and Saint-Saens, Manet, Rodin or Bartholomé, or Guy de Maupassant or Zola? True, there is not a Voltaire or a Balzac, but have we a Gainsborough or a Johnson? There have been times when there were more geniuses, but there have been none when so many men were capable of good work and when so many more were able to appreciate it. At the present time, all over the world, there is a dearth of genius, but there is a plethora of talent; perhaps even there may be genius which is not yet revealed to us. And of this talent France has more than her full share; her music may not equal that of the Slavs, her literature that of the British; for argument's sake let us even admit the untrue, viz. that some nation surpasses France in the arts of painting and architecture, and when we consider culture as an entity the irresistible conviction is forced upon us that, now as ever, France leads the world in the realms of art. The genius exists in the people, not in their government, and genius will out.

But we can go further yet; it is a fact that the arts are flourishing, not in spite of the Republic, but thanks to it. Let the British detractor of the French *régime* compare the state of things in Monarchic Britain and Republican France. Let him, in this country, seek out the Ministry of Fine Arts: he will seek in vain; he will find the National Gallery everlastingly short of funds,

street improvements left to the tender mercies of elected county or borough councillors, official architecture to nobody in particular. In France, on the contrary, these matters have been thought so important that a Cabinet Minister is appointed to supervise them and, with the aid of an expert staff, he watches with keen eyes over the beauties of the land. In this country we find the stage handed over to the American musical-comedy-monger or to the self-advertising actor-manager; in Paris two national theatres, of Monarchic creation it is true, but maintained by the Republic, preserve the classical tradition and affix to high-class modern plays, as the greatest of artistic honours, the seal of their approval; in Great Britain again, in this most musical of countries, the production of an opera is a risk and cannot be indulged in freely because a few fiascos would ruin a season; in Paris we find two State-aided opera-houses, where again the great classical tradition is preserved and new works are staged without endangering the exchequer of a producer. In the presence of all this, can it be said that the Republic does not favour the arts? It facilitates the education of their exponents by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, showers distinctions upon them and surrounds them with an atmosphere of appreciation in which they can develop to the full.

I have consciously allowed myself to digress, because it is essential to show how deep is the error of those who contend that a democratic *régime* is not favourable to the increase of culture. Strictly speaking, it is more propitious as regards the masses of the people, for its aim is to raise them, while the object of aristocratic castes is usually to preserve their state of ignorance, so as to keep them down. The evidence I have adduced

should prove that the tree of knowledge can bloom under the Republic and that it can bear the fairest of fruits; no sympathy must be wasted on Reaction simply because its object is reversion to a dead system. Reaction will not add one iota to the stature of the French race, let alone the cubit that lovers of personal rule anticipate. Their opinion is, however, not all-important; the test is French feeling in the matter. Foreign critics should always remember that a nation is the best judge of its own affairs before they prescribe for its supposed ailments; it is therefore essential that we should obtain an idea of the attitude of the people with regard to Reaction and of the prospects of a return to past systems of government.

Speaking generally, it may be said that the French attitude on the subject is one of indifference; were it one of hostility there would be more hope for Royalists and Bonapartists, for the hostile can be converted or outnumbered by new recruits, but the indifferent who, in France, are legion are beyond the reach of Reaction simply because they do not want to trouble themselves with the question.

Spasmodic interest has been evinced during the last ten years, as, for instance, in the Dreyfus case, the Déroulède plot and the anti-clerical agitation, but even this has only been collateral with these events. This attitude is easily explained by the fact that the Reactionaries form but a small, if clamorous, minority. From the Revolution to the present day, popular feeling has been antagonistic to caste distinctions; a witty pamphleteer said of the Frenchman that "his dream was to be his neighbour's President," and it is not untrue, but he rarely tries to establish a claim to bluer

blood. The Frenchman is usually a true Republican, in the sense that he thinks himself as good a man as any, but he also thinks any man as good as himself.

This attitude needed no fostering by the State; the revolutionary tradition has so deeply influenced French education and character that the Declaration of the Rights of Man lives more truly in the people than the rather pompous clarion blast: "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité." Yet we must note that the law has not pandered to caste distinctions. The code Napoleon, though inspired by a great Reactionary, did not venture to go back on revolutionary principles; all through its political vicissitudes during the nineteenth century the French State preserved this attitude, for not even Charles X or Napoleon III ventured to break away from the Imperial precedent. Thus, when the Third Republic came into being, it did not have to undo the work of its predecessors; it only adopted a more uncompromising attitude towards titles. At the present time, no titles of nobility are legally recognised by the State, registrars of births, marriages and deaths making a practice of omitting from their entries nobiliary qualifications; there is a shadowy impression abroad that those in a position to prove their direct descent from nobles of authentic creation have a legal right to their titles, an impression which was fortified by an ill-advised proposal to tax those distinctions, but no law on the statute book can be cited in support of the theory. The use of the prefix "de" is allowed, not as a title however, but as part of the name; no distinction attaches to its use. Indeed, in a country where ridicule is said to kill, the prospects of "de" were

apparently blighted by the happy lines telling how a yeoman, on distinction bent,

> . . . Entoura son domaine d'un fossé bourbeux
> Et de Monsieur de l'Isle prit le nom pompeux !

The picture of the muddy ditch, surrounding the farm and conferring upon the owner the name "of the Isle," is a happy expression of French feeling on the subject.

Class distinctions do exist in France to a certain extent, but they are created by differences of education and of fortune; thus the attitude of these classes towards the French *noblesse* varies to some extent. The working class is frankly hostile to the "aristos," a word often used by them as an insult. It should be said that the French workman sees very little difference between the *marquis* and the *bourgeois* and that he has nowadays a tendency to sweep into a common limbo of contempt any person who wears a black coat.

If particular hostility is directed against the aristocrats, it is usually due to Socialistic agitation against the leaders of the Reactionary party; of late years we have seen the lilies lead in Parliament the clerical and militarist sections against the united forces of the tricolour and the red flag. Naturally enough, political hatred has turned to personal hatred, and any man who bears a title or even writes the modest "de" before his name is a suspect; it must be confessed that his political leanings usually justify this suspicion. As regards the *bourgeoisie*, the great bulk take but little interest in the aristocrats; their wives do not, as they would in Great Britain, devote a considerable portion of their leisure to the chronicling of births, marriages, deaths and divorces of the aristocrats: nor do they

show any great desire to acquire for their daughters such desirable noble husbands as the Americans may leave them. The *bourgeois* are usually neither for nor against the *noblesse;* they do not seek to penetrate into the charmed circle, nor do they wish to interfere with its existence. The richer section, particularly the new rich, have it is true some tuft-hunting tendencies, but even among this class they are not very marked; matrimonial alliances are not very frequent, for the aristocrats are usually poor and the *bourgeoisie*, though well-to-do, does not look upon a high-sounding name as good value for its money.

The attitude of the Government reflects that of its supporters; for the first twenty years after the foundation of the Third Republic, little notice was taken of the *noblesse.* They were distinguished neither by favour nor by persecution; perhaps, if anything, the balance was slightly in their favour, as the French Government felt the usefulness of selecting for foreign embassies men who would be acceptable to Monarchic governments. It is unlikely that this state of things would have changed had not the *noblesse* compromised itself actively with the so-called "Nationalist" movement. The Nationalist party includes Republican and pseudo-Republican elements, strongly tinged with clericalism and militarism; many Nationalists advocate the selection of the President by referendum, which amounts to choosing a dictator. The last French *plébiscite* gave Napoleon III to the nation and is said to have been shamefully gerrymandered, yet it is to this system that many Nationalists owe allegiance. Finding themselves too weak when isolated, Reactionaries of the Royalist and Bonapartist sections gravitated naturally towards this group

and became prominent in its ranks. From 1895 to this day they have been practically identified as regards a policy which is mainly one of "against any Government proposal." For this reason, the benevolent attitude of the Republican Government has changed; seeing its most vigorous enemies among the aristocrats, finding them in the van of clerical agitation, it keeps a very tight hand over their action and a strict watch over their movements. It is not likely that friendly co-operation will ever again be possible between the democratic *régime* and the avowed enemies of the Republic; this, however, should not cause much anxiety to the Government, as, to all political intents and purposes, the Royalist and Bonapartist parties are dead and the Reactionaries dwindling fast. The figures given in this chapter will, I believe, triumphantly demonstrate the truth of this statement.

Taken as a whole, the Royalists and Bonapartists have no power to speak of and that for two reasons. Influence, that most subtle and insidious of forces, is always traceable to a superiority, either of intelligence or of wealth; power, in its brutal sense, may be found in the hands of the incompetent, thanks to a concourse of circumstances, in virtue of expediency or by favour of unlimited audacity, but influence, all-pervading and all-embracing, is the privilege of the superior. Shorn of power by the Third Republic, Royalists and Bonapartists might have retained this shadowy but valuable asset, if the principal sources of influence were not denied them. Education is no longer their preserve, since all classes have penetrated more and more into the Government public schools and into the Government universities; equality of knowledge does away with the mainstay of usurpa-

tory power. Thus, the cheapness and accessibility of all grades of education having thrown wide open the gates of knowledge, the prestige of the "upper" classes has declined to such an extent as to nullify the appellation. But education is only the second of the two most powerful sources of influence; wealth is at least as important. The rich man, who holds in his hands the destinies of a country, who may at will hunt out of the district a tenant whose political views are distasteful to him (and such cases are not unknown in modern British history), possesses a weapon the efficacy of which is painfully obvious; even should he be a man of punctilious rectitude, the golden glamour that attaches to his name and the state in which he lives invest him with notoriety of a special kind, cause him to be heard respectfully and followed, if not by sturdy opponents, at least by the mass of the undecided. Such is often the case in Great Britain, where the problem of influence is further complicated by the political power wielded by the Peers, who are usually great landlords; such is not the case in France, where great estates are the exception, not the rule.

In France we find an impoverished nobility, living in proud isolation in gloomy castles, often in a wing which is all they can afford to keep open, on the scanty produce of small estates; too proud to enter the field of commerce or of industry, the only professions open to them are the army and the navy; too poor to fraternise with the wealthy *bourgeois* whom they despise, they live in self-centred solitude, dying hard, with something of the sullen splendour of the wild boar at bay. They have no money for electioneering, above all for keeping up the local position that is necessary if they are to

succeed at the poll; thus they are of no account in their district and can only arouse the hatred of all classes, of the *bourgeois* stung to the quick by their disdain, of the sturdy artisan who has no fancy for names prefaced with a title.

He who lacks money "may not spede," and such is the fate of the French aristocrat. Of those who have settled in Paris, a section has degenerated and lost its last claim to superiority. So long as a man or a class wilfully abstain from mingling with other men or classes, their arrogance may ultimately be recognised as justified; so long as man is alone he is strong, but as soon as he condescends he falls; such has been the fate of this section of the aristocrats who, by mixing with the moneyed classes whom they despise, by selling their titles in marriage and entering as directors into businesses they do not profess to understand, have covered themselves with discredit. True, another section still lives in proud isolation in old and gloomy palaces on the left bank of the Seine, in an atmosphere of attar of roses and plots; there can still be found, feeble and courteous, the remains of the once tyrannous dominating class. They still nurse the fond illusion that the lilies may yet wave over Versailles; amiable and pathetic, but not dangerous.

In a few districts of France their power still survives; Brittany has never entirely fallen away from its old allegiance, nor has the Vendée, since the days when the soldiers of the First Republic, under Hoche and Marceau, fought a bloody war for the triumph of the tricolour. Beyond these two provinces the Royalists still retain some influence in a few scattered constituencies, where their power is steadily crumbling away under the

onslaught of Republicans and Socialists. The sun, emblem of Louis XIV, is setting.

The state of things has been reflected at the polls during the last ten years; in 1898, in 1902, in 1906, the elections for the Lower House have resulted in ever more decisive Royalist defeats; the Bonapartists no longer openly exist in Parliament; the Nationalists received a final and crushing blow in 1906. Whether we take as a basis the seats obtained or the votes cast we must arrive at the same conclusion; at the present time, out of 591 members of the Lower House, only twenty-five put themselves forward as Royalists, a number to which we may add a few Reactionaries masquerading under the name of Nationalists or Conservatives; in 1906, out of a total vote of 8,832,000, the Royalists aggregated 291,800, say 3 per cent of the total poll. In either case, therefore, we can look upon theirs as a lost cause; if evolution is at work, it is certainly not in their direction: politically speaking the party is dead, and only proves a source of disorder and discontent.

As regards the Bonapartists, the position is similar but worse; they have no avowed spokesman in the Lower House and no obvious following; there is every indication that, whereas the Royalists still retain a feeble hold on the districts that were once under a beneficent feudal rule, the Bonapartists, scattered all over the country, could make themselves heard only in the case of a referendum, to which the bulk of the Nationalists are pledged. Their hope lies in the selection of their Pretender as a candidate for the Presidency by the Nationalist party, in the event of their triumph. Thus the Bonapartist vote must be sought for in the Nationalist total or in that of the Conservatives with

whom they side in default of a Bonapartist candidate; generally speaking the Nationalists can be put down as the Reactionary militarists and the Conservatives as the Reactionary clericals. These two parties collect Royalist and Bonapartist votes: should they ever succeed in their quixotic tilts at windmills and upset the Republic, an immediate break-up of the coalition would of course take place. How remote that possibility is appears from the following figures.

In 1906 an abnormally heavy poll and an unusually varied body of candidates enabled the electors to cast their vote as nearly as possible in exact conformity with their views; thus, out of about 12,000,000 voters nearly 9,000,000 went to the poll—which, as any British electioneer will testify, is a large proportion. Out of this figure the imposing total of 6,275,000 votes were cast in favour of Republican candidates of various shades and of Socialists whose hostility to the Royalist party cannot, of course, be challenged; over and above this total, 1,072,000 votes went to the Liberals, who are, generally speaking, Republicans of an old-fashioned type recruited among the provincial urban middle class. The attitude of this section is mainly one of opposition to Socialism; their vote is rather economic than political but, in a general way, it may be asserted that, though they would be unlikely to revolt against a Reactionary *coup d'état* if their interests were not menaced, they are Republican in tendency. Indeed, their conservative attitude alone would wed them to the existing system, simply because they are inimical to all political upheavals; however, for fear of being taxed with optimism, I will put them down as neutral and leave the Republican "bloc" of 6,275,000 votes to

deal with the coalesced Reactionaries. The Reactionary forces polled altogether 1,406,212 votes, of which the Royalists accounted for 291,854, the Conservatives for 356,840, and the Nationalists for 757,518; these figures show the blackest case for the Republic, since many of the Conservatives and Nationalists, priest and soldier-ridden as they may be, are probably Republican enough in spirit. However, if we waive this consideration we find that, leaving the neutral Liberals out of count, out of every five electors, four voted Republican without doubt or reservation, over one-third of the Republican aggregate being made up of Socialist or Socialistic elements. In the face of such figures, can any one contend that the chances of Monarchic reaction are not dead? The Republic may grow more Socialistic or it may uphold as staunchly as ever the rights of individual ownership, but is this imposing total, attained to in spite of the thirty-eight years that have elapsed, in spite of the doctrine of the swing of the pendulum, likely to dwindle to such an extent as to give the Reactionaries the slightest ground for hope?

They cannot even hope to triumph by favour of a snap vote; at the present time the Lower House is divided into the Republican "Bloc,"[1] numbering 412[2] members and the Opposition to whom 170[2] deputies owe allegiance. Thus, even on non-constitutional questions, such as Church or Army matters, two deputies out of three are solidly Republican; were a Reactionary constitution ever proposed, the Opposition would at once shrink by almost two-thirds, owing to the defection of the

[1] The split between Radicals and Socialists has endangered the "Bloc," but it is solid on constitutional questions.

[2] According to their election addresses.

Progressive Republicans and Liberals, when its position would become absurd. For the sake of convenience, I will give here a table showing how the votes were cast in 1906:—

Republican "Bloc."			*Opposition.*	
Republicans .	1,315,773	...	Progressive Republicans .	967,069
Radicals . .	1,631,957	...	Liberals . .	1,072,396
Socialistic Radicals .	1,265,985	...	Nationalists .	757,518
Socialists .	1,083,172	...	Conservatives .	356,840
			Royalists . .	291,854
Say,	5,296,000		Say,	3,445,000

It will be noted in the first place that these two totals do not tally with the total poll of 8,832,862; the difference is made up by some 90,000 votes given to Independents in various districts, and represented in the House by two members only. As regards the discrepancy between the Republican total of 6,275,000 and the "Bloc" total of 5,296,000, the difference is explained by the fact that, at the present time, Progressive Republicans vote with the Reactionaries, though remaining true to the basic principles of the Republican creed.

The difference between Republican and "Bloc" voters lies solely in the fact that the "Bloc" unites all the more advanced elements of the party into a compact mass, in whose hands, since M. Waldeck-Rousseau's ministry, the destinies of the country have been placed; ever since 1900 it has been solid, not even the reaction against M. Combes or the misfortunes of M. Delcassé having disrupted it.

Whether, therefore, we consider constitutional or non-constitutional questions, the prospects of the Reactionaries are hopeless; in the latter case they are outnumbered by at least five to three, in the former by four to one. The unlikelihood of a change is evidenced by the ever-increasing tendency to extremism that manifests itself in France as in most other European countries; the growth of Socialism and its influence on the immediately overlying strata of society are not likely to bring back to power clerical or militarist elements and still less the Monarchic parties. Again let it be affirmed: Reaction in France is dead and buried. The last elections for the Chamber of Deputies having been held in 1906, the country's feelings cannot be tested by the same means until 1910; the results in 1906 fully endorsed the past policy of the Government and the elections of the *Conseils Généraux* in 1907 were noteworthy because they re-affirmed the 1906 mandate, in spite of M. Clemenceau's vigorous treatment of the Church. Out of 1439 seats, 1158 are now held by the "Bloc" and only 281 by the Opposition; the results show that the "Bloc" registered a gain of 101 seats. If we remember that the members of the *Conseils Généraux* are among the electors of the Senate, we realise at once the complete *débâcle* of the Reactionaries.

Before closing this chapter something must be said of the various parties that form the "Bloc" and its Opposition. Strictly speaking, this classification should be incorporated in one of the chapters devoted to the Republican idea, but the undesirability of scattering figures or of repeating them must serve to excuse the digression.

The "Bloc" itself is a new creation, the word having been coined by M. Waldeck-Rousseau. Before its formation the Lower House was divided roughly into three sections: the Left, comprising the advanced elements, such as Socialists and extreme Radicals; the Right, comprising the Reactionaries of various shades; and the Centre, a middle party solidly Republican in tendency and of moderate views. In those days the Centre was not usually powerful enough to constitute a Ministry, but no Cabinet could live without its support: it served as a brake on extremism and tempered Reaction in case of need. Theoretically the system was excellent, but in practice it meant very unstable Ministries. The position will be best understood if it be imagined that, in the British House of Commons, an equal number of Conservatives and Liberals were returned, leaving the Irish party to give a casting vote. I believe that it will be agreed that this position would be painful; and that was exactly the outcome of the attitude of the Centre.

When the Dreyfus case was revived and it appeared for a moment that the existence of the Republic could be endangered, it was found necessary to consolidate the advanced elements into one party, which became the Republican "Bloc." Thus a working majority was obtained and stability at last attained. At the present time no one thinks of reviving the Centre; there are no more Laodiceans in the Chamber of Deputies.

The "Bloc" is composed of Republicans, Radicals, Socialistic Radicals and Socialists. They support such measures as disestablishment, income tax, and, up to a certain point, disarmament. There is, of course, considerable divergence of views between the component

parties, but in practice they effect working compromises —a far more satisfactory system than that under which we see, in Great Britain, one party crush the other for a term of years, after which the process is reversed. Republicans and Radicals are in favour of moderate social reform, whereas Socialistic Radicals and Socialists are either willing or anxious to consider such questions as municipalising or nationalising individual property. To all intents and purposes the "Bloc" is therefore united, and it is not likely to break up until the greater questions of social reform come to the fore. The Opposition comprises mainly the Progressive Republicans, the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Nationalists and the Royalists. The first four sections do not openly attack the Republican institutions; indeed, the Progressive Republicans are sound to the core on constitutional questions. As regards the next three parties, it may be said, roughly, that they are practically identical in views, except that the Liberals and Conservatives are specialised for the defence of the "persecuted" Church, and the Nationalists for the defence of the "menaced honour" of the Army. In many cases identical views were expounded by candidates bearing different party labels, the names being adopted to suit local needs.

With these essential notes I close a digression which it was essential to make; it is the natural sequel to analysis of parties that consideration of the Reactionary prospects presupposes. Impartial examination of the figures of the recent polls must bring the reader to the view that France is nowadays Republican to the backbone and more firmly wedded than ever to the institutions that spring from the glorious traditions of 1789. The colossus does not stand on feet of clay; its pedestal

is the great mass of sober, earnest, thrifty Frenchmen, who are anxious to see their land developed on broad and humane lines; they do not want to go too fast or too far; they detest risky social experiments as much as foreign adventures likely to embroil the country in sterile wars, but they detest still more the prospect held out to them by Reaction of a return to a pretorian or to a spiritual yoke.

CHAPTER VII

CHURCH AND STATE

HE would have been a bold man who, in the nineties, ventured to prophesy the course that the impending struggle between the French State and the French Church would take, and his prophecy would have been received with the jeers which are usually the wages of boldness. In those days a historic Church still held sway over French souls or, at least, it still impressed the lay mind with the pomp of its services and the fervour displayed at its processions and pilgrimages. Acknowledged by the State, the Roman hierarchy controlled absolutely the immense body of the faithful, their deeds, their purses and even their thoughts; loved by many of the people, accepted with respect by the masses, it could afford to laugh at enemies whose sullen threats appeared wild and unworthy of notice. The Church stood for all that was refined and æsthetic, for purity and spiritual charm: indeed, for most of the people of France, it was the Mother-Church, the Mother of Souls.

But those days are gone and the scene has changed with lightning rapidity. We must not bewail it, if liberty have to be sacrificed at the shrine of beauty, but it is natural and human to regret that the Church should have sunk from the level of an estate of the realm to that of a hunted, persecuted, discredited body,

shepherdless and outlawed. For the priests are as nearly as possible outlaws; they will not recognise the will of the State, and then, as the State must live, it must strike. No longer is the priest in France the servant of a holy church; for the immense majority of the people, he is the *calotin*. The very sound of the word is opprobrious; "flatcap," as the London apprentices used to say in days of old, is an unpleasant name to apply to the fathers spiritual. Yet such is the nickname that has fastened on the priesthood of France; for the mass of the people, the crow is now the emblem of the Roman Catholic Church. And, bitterest thought of all, the Church of Rome has brought on itself the wrath of the nation, of the nation that was once "the eldest daughter of the Church." The Roman Catholic Church has been arraigned, indicted and sentenced; it is serving its time to-day and, in all likelihood, a life penalty.

No advocate has spoken in the heart of the nation; men who are not with the Church are against it, and its foes are legion. France is not irreligious but she is estranged from Religion and every day widens the gulf that separates them. So much has been written on the crusade against the Cross, that I will not venture to enlarge on the subject; every important review has had articles on the troubles that have parted Church and State in France, some of them from the pen of those most authorised to speak, statesmen French and English, believers and iconoclasts. And thus the view has apparently taken shape that we see in the French a nation of atheists, or at least of agnostics; this is one of the half-truths that are as bad as untruths because they are so hard to controvert.

Before this charge, the conscientious Frenchman feels like the debater in the presence of one who is his master in the art of dialectics; foiled at every point, his arguments refuted, he feels that, however weak his case may seem, he is right and nevertheless cannot prevail. The very fact that the French are a Latin race presupposes that they have within themselves depths of a passionate religious devotion almost beyond conception. All through history the French nation has been in the van of religious movements, from the First Crusade, when Peter the Hermit carried the sword of the avenging angel ablaze through the fields of France, to raise against the Saracen the holy fury of Christianity, to the last days of the Eagles when a French guard remained, in a hostile country, the last soldiers of the Pope. In no other land has religious strife been so bitter, so continuous, as it has been in France; the horrors of the Inquisition, the burning of Servetus, the massacre of the Hussites, the stake and the pillory in England, all these are equalled and more than equalled in France where religious war was rife for a hundred years, religious persecution for four hundred. Is it to be believed that this nation can have turned away from Christianity? It is incredible, it is impossible: it has turned away from the Church because it was no longer Christian, and Christianity is paying the price. The French are not irreligious; their æsthetic sense alone would preserve them from ever sinking into the ugliness of materialism, but they ask for a living not for a dead faith; they are a nation of free men and will have none of a creed for slaves; they are a race of intellectuals: a faith only fit for dullards is not for them. The fact that they have produced fanatics and martyrs by the

score is not evidence; the past has had its glories but it has had its errors too, and nothing says that these magnificent examples of self-destruction were anything but sublime folly. But, at once, our attention is arrested by a singular fact; the Roman Catholic Church does not hold undisputed sway even among the faithful: the worshippers number among them several hundreds of thousands of Protestants and Jews. All-pervading as was the Church of Rome, it could not wipe out these vigorous and heroic sections; they have lived through the turmoil and emerged into peace. Moreover, among them there have been no schisms, no revolts; these people have not turned away from their spiritual chiefs, but have clung to them so closely that their strength has remained unimpaired and that, to this day, they retain their vigour. Must we be driven to conclude that the Jew and the Protestant are more spiritually minded than the Catholic? True, the Catholic has in French history been the persecutor and other sections the victims, but we know what Catholics have suffered in other lands and can conclude that they would have withstood with equal fortitude the blows of Fate in their own country. Yet, there is the fact: whereas the Roman Catholic faith has lost its hold upon millions of men and women, other denominations have retained the support of every one of their members, who remained firm in spite of the wave of atheism or agnosticism which is swamping the country.

Can it be explained away? Can even a tentative explanation be offered? I doubt it. French Protestants and French Jews are as devout, as clean-living, as spiritually minded as are our most enlightened Churchmen and Nonconformists; a visit to any Parisian syna-

gogue or to the Oratory will demonstrate in a moment that the French have not forgotten how to pray. The congregations are as large as ever they were, and they contain as great a proportion of men as in England. This distinction of sex must everywhere be made, and particularly in France, where Roman Catholicism flaunts a sumptuous æstheticism, voluptuous and worldly, capable of appealing both to the refined and to the sensuous.

Women are the last prop of the French Church; loyal as they ever are to all lost causes, they cling even now with pathetic energy to the remnant of that which once was great. In spite of the Law, in spite of domestic influences, many still worship the Church and nothing but the Church. Can we refuse them sympathy? No; but we must face this fact, that the men have deserted the Church and that nevermore will it gather in again the souls it has lost. French Catholics have not turned against Christ: they have turned against His ministers because they have found them unfaithful servants—because the priest has given them a stone when they asked for bread. The Church is dying, dying hard but surely; the people have turned their backs on its ministers and, though not yet agnostics, they are on the threshold of agnosticism and the Church puts forth no hand to stay them. Another generation and those that were devout will be agnostics; yet another generation and France will no longer be a Christian State. And that because the Church has abused its trust instead of fulfilling it.

The reasons are not far to seek and, numerous though they be, they can be summed up in the word "theocracy." The French have ever been impatient of

tyranny, and they will not discriminate between secular and spiritual oppression. The Roman Catholic Church has fallen because it soared too high: its wings were those of Icarus, not those of the Archangel. As is often the case with established churches, the Roman Catholic Church became an ossified and retrograde body, antiquated in its methods, out of touch with the people, incapable of ministering to anything more than their material needs. With magnificent contempt it has brushed aside the power of the State; it has refused to listen to the voice of the faithful—and they are faithful no more.

Thus, is it wonderful that the Roman Catholic Church has lost its hold on the people? Is it not far more wonderful that it has retained it for so long, in the face of ever-advancing science and secular philosophy? The Catholic Church was founded for the poor and lowly in spirit: the Roman Catholic Church has remained the Church of the lowly in intellect. It has amassed against itself every possible weapon of attack; it has crowded its ritual and tradition with everything that could make it repugnant to men of brains. And, as the French are an intelligent people, a people whose intelligence is ever growing, they have turned against the Church. The root grievance, as regards externals, is the ritual. For instance, is it for a moment admissible that the Common Prayer of the Church in France should be conducted in Latin? A relic from the ancient days, when dead languages represented the sum total of human knowledge, has been kept alive in the forcing-house of sacerdotalism. Thus we see the people confronted with prayers the sometimes abstruse theology of which would be sufficient to baffle the lay mind, couched in

addition in a foreign tongue; mechanically and by dint of repetition, the worshippers acquire a general idea of their meaning, but none but the spiritually minded will go further than that. Is this an appeal, a personal appeal?

Moreover, the priest has abused his power over the superstitious and the dull; the iniquity of the paid mass for the rest of a departed soul, the picturesque ineptitude of a votive offering in the shape of a candle of a size commensurate with the magnitude of the blessing—can anything be more calculated to arouse the thought in the awakening mind, that the Church is nothing but a huge money-making concern, an instrument of simony? Little by little the French peasants, the French workers have realised this, and little by little they have come to the conclusion that it was folly to throw away money, hard-earned and well-beloved, on sterile practices for which they could see no return. And thus they began to think. From that moment they were no longer Roman Catholics, in so far that they presumed to pit their poor wits against those of their priests, their masters.

A startling instance of this attitude of obscurantism is to be found in the Decree of the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition, a papal commission entrusted with the supervision of conscientious belief and of lay opinion on dogmatic subjects. This Decree is dated 3rd July 1907 and is the answer of the Papacy to the anti-clerical movement; it is so recent that it may be taken as the present opinion of the Roman Catholic Church and carries weight equally with the decrees that condemned Galileo and Copernicus, which is a suggestive fact. It comprises sixty-five articles, so that it is

impossible to quote it *in extenso;* moreover, these articles do not deal with propositions that must be accepted but with propositions which the Church rejects, which makes it somewhat difficult of reading; for this reason, in the following translation, I have inverted the phrasing, so as to obtain definite statements instead of forbidden doctrines.

The importance of the Decree is so remarkable that some of the articles must be quoted; most are concerned with dogma and need not be reproduced in the present instance, as they deal purely with "heretical" doctrines such as those of the Protestant churches, but a certain number are of considerable interest because they regulate the relations between the Church and the faithful. The complete document was published *in extenso* in *Demain*, a Church organ, in the issue for 26th July 1907.[1]

Extract from the preamble:—[2]

". . . It is to be deplored that there be even Catholic writers who, exceeding the limits fixed them by the Apostles *and the Church*, seek, on pleas of higher criticism and of historic truth, to promote that which they call progressive, but which is in reality deformed dogma. . . .

> *Article* 1. The ecclesiastic law, which prescribes that writings which deal with the Holy Scripture must be subjected to censorship, extends to those which are concerned with the criticism and the *scientific commentary* of the books of the Old and the New Testament.

[1] Can be obtained from 2 Rue Simon-Maupin, Lyons. Price fr. 0.25.
[2] The italics are the author's, except in the case of the word "Index."

Article 4. The *prelates* of the Church may determine by dogmatic definitions the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures.

Article 7. The Church, when denouncing error, may *demand* from the faithful conscientious assent to its decrees.

Article 8. Are guilty, those who do not defer to the prohibitions pronounced by the Congregation of the *Index* and other Roman Congregations.

Article 22. Those doctrines which are given *by the Church* as revealed are heaven-born truths and are not the interpretation of certain religious facts proceeding from the workings of the human mind throughout the ages.

Article 23. There may not and does not truly exist any opposition between those facts reported in the Holy Scripture and the dogma of the Church connected therewith; thus, *no critic may reject as false those facts which the Church holds to be true.*

Article 24. He is guilty who lays down premises from which it appears that any dogma is *historically* false or uncertain, even should he not deny the dogma itself.

Article 53. The organic constitution of the Church is *not subject to variation;* Christian society is *not*, as is human society, subject to an eternal evolution.

Article 56. The Roman Church has become the head of all churches, not owing to political circumstances but *in virtue of a divine ordinance.*"

These articles should surely suffice to indicate that

the Roman Catholic Church remains true to its traditions and to justify the charges levelled at it in this chapter. The Church appears therein as censor of the library of the faithful (Articles 1 and 8), as tyrant of their deeds (Articles 7, 23 and 24) and of their thoughts (Articles 4 and 22). Article 53, which denies the existence of evolutionary forces, and Article 56, in which the Decree claims for the Church direct divine authority, are a worthy conclusion to this monument of absolutism, so much so that it appears useless to dilate on the subject.[1] I will quote only Anglican opinion on the Decree, as the Established Church is more likely to be in sympathy with Rome than are Nonconformist bodies, so that the following extracts from the *Church Times* of 20th September 1907 represent the most friendly criticism to be expected from British opinion, especially as they proceed from the pen of a Roman Catholic writer :—

"Throughout the whole document runs the conception of the Church as a mere appanage of the Papacy; of the body of faithful, Bishops, priests and laity as a horde of slaves, obedient to the nod of a despot, without rights or liberties, save such as it may be the

[1] The obscurantism of the Papacy has been exemplified by the persecution which has been indulged in with regard to the more liberal section of the priesthood. The Archbishop of Algiers and the Archbishop of Avignon have been compelled to resign their sees by the Ultramontane party, which resented their Republican tendencies; the Bishop of Tarentaise, Mgr. Lacroix (who retired in October 1907), was guilty of the same crime and had, moreover, organised a diocesan association, which the Government acknowledged as an Association of Worship. This association (Société de St. Sigismond) *was composed exclusively of priests* and the Bishop was its chairman; yet it was dissolved by the Pope, and now Mgr. Lacroix, an honest Republican, has been driven out of the fold because of his loyalty to the law of his country.

pleasure of the despot to grant them. Never before has the absolutism of Rome been defined with such brutal frankness.

". . . The third part of the encyclical contains practical instructions of the most despotic and intolerable character which, if they can be enforced, may make it difficult for an intelligent and honest man to remain in the ranks of the clergy."

Need we add much more to such an indictment, to one, especially, coming from such a source? Yet the Decree is merely the latest embodiment of the traditional policy of Rome.

The Church of Rome has never encouraged thought; its enthusiasm for its cause, its charity, its love of the arts have been magnificent: its hostility to thought is patent. Let any man who does not credit this consult the *Index expurgatorius*, where he will find a goodly company of thinkers, from Renan and Zola to Spencer and Darwin. Where thought steps in "higher criticism" follows and such is not meet for the faithful; hidebound in its prejudices, sunk into a morass of tradition and voluntary ignorance, again I ask: Is it a wonder that the Church has lost its hold upon a nation of thinkers and of students? It has tried to ride a restive horse on the curb and pulled the rein tighter when the steed laid back its ears, with the usual result for the rash rider. Mr. R. de Marmande, in several illuminating articles in the *Westminster Gazette*, in 1906 and 1907, pokes pungent fun at the *Index* of the Abbé Bethléem, which prohibits everything, from Chateaubriand, that very gentlemanly writer, to Pierre Loti the idyllic!

All this, however, though enough to explain why the

French have turned away from the Church, is not enough to show why they have turned against it. Had it confined itself to "popery and prelacy," it might have gone on for ever in the rut of its insignificance, undisturbed and unheeded. Little by little the people would have attended Mass less and less; they would no longer have bought indulgences or cherished holy medals and scapulars; a few old women would have persisted in telling their beads; the *bourgeois* might, out of regard for respectability, have subjected their children to baptism and supplemented the legal marriage before the *maire* by a religious service, and the Church would have become a picturesque survival. All this has happened, and nothing more would have happened if Frenchmen had not felt threatened by this occult, mystic, foreign power; they are a pacific race, but their character is aptly described by the great rhyme of an obscure songster :—

> Cet animal est très méchant :
> Quand on l'attaque il se défend !

In the case of France the animal waited to be attacked, and then turned on its tormentor and rent it limb from limb.

Briefly, the Church is charged with having attempted the enslavement of the people and of having tried to compass the downfall of the Republic. Of course this old charge has many a time been levelled at the Church, and the priesthood state in answer that the Church has never been hostile to the Republic, any more than to any Monarchy, because it is international and all-embracing. French Republicans say that this is not the case and that the Church has ever been their

historic enemy; it is certainly a fact that, without going back any further than the restoration of Louis XVIII, we at once find the clergy on the side of the Monarchy and of the aristocracy, as is also the case under Charles X. The Church has always followed in the train of the powerful leader, of the autocrat ready to dispense favours and to assist it in securing its grip upon the people. Can any other attitude be expected from the most backward of Churches with the lowest of educational standards? The Church never loved even the *Concordat*, in spite of the great advantages conferred upon it thereby; the Church wants to be the State, not to be its ally. Failing this, it is ready enough to join forces with a man or a class which it feels will be faithful and obedient; with a democracy it cannot and will not deal, knowing well that the day will come when this too enlightened people will shake off its yoke and sweep it out of existence.

The Church is the enemy of the Republic; for many years it carried on an insidious propaganda against the modern State by legitimate and illegitimate party methods. Practically all French Reactionaries are Catholics and practically all French Catholics are Reactionaries; they have prostituted the Cross by invoking it against a system of government not in itself evil. For years the instrument of the Papacy, *La Croix*, has spread, far and wide, hostility to the Republic as a system; money has been lavished upon its production and circulation.[1] Other papers of various political shades have eked out a mysterious existence with the smallest of circulations and no advertisements to speak

[1] I can recall twice having had a copy thrust into my hand, in the street, as a gift during the acute period of the Dreyfus case.

of; as they invariably aired both Reactionary and clerical views, what can be the answer to the question, Who paid the bill? The work was done by the Papacy and its agents in the most thorough manner and with all the violence that characterises religious fanaticism; no stone was left unturned in Parliament and among the people, but the people did not respond as did the Vendean peasant in revolutionary days under Cathelinau, Lescure and La Roche-Jacquelin. The Church struck at the very root of the system by attempting to capture the children, by turning them out bigots and potential enemies of the Republic, and for this work the religious orders were told off.

Numerous, powerful and rich, the orders, now broken up or under the heel of the Government, proved a dangerous foe. They occupied a unique position, having on their side, as opposed to a mushroom government, an antiquity that could not fail to appeal to the peasantry; they were the dispensers of wealth in the neighbourhood, not only by means of charity and generous hospitality, but thanks to their spending power, cheap or gratuitous education, and sometimes, as in the case of the Grande Chartreuse, because they were the local industrial centre. Thus, their position was privileged; not only did they hold in their hands those whose confessions they heard, but they held them by the stronger bond of material advantage. The orders did their work well; secretly or openly their voice made itself felt at the elections; openly, those who dared to differ from them were persecuted and, above all, money, supplied from their ample possessions or obtained from the faithful, was abundantly forthcoming for campaign purposes.

Thus, the French were aroused and they understood that the real enemies of the nation were not at their frontiers but were living in their midst, numerous, active and intelligent; thus, by degrees, the nation saw that it would have to fight for its liberty, that liberty which is the life of a race. Away with indifference and agnosticism! It was time to take arms and repel this foreign state within the State, it was time for another revolution, a revolution against the Pope. As has already been said, the French do not shrink from revolutions: their Radicalism is constitutional, so that they were perfectly ready for action when the Dreyfus case, that most epoch-making of judicial iniquities, proved to be the match that was to fire the hidden mine.

It is not my intention to take up this momentous case as it is still fresh in the memory of the interested; Major Dreyfus has been rehabilitated before public opinion as well as before the Courts, he has been restored to his rank, he has been made a *Chevalier* of the *Légion d'Honneur.* The greater part of the world recognises his innocence and probably the greater part of France follows suit: the case is finished and is no more interesting than any other judicial trial. But the Dreyfus case, in itself nothing but a sordid conspiracy, has had an extraordinary influence upon the last ten years of French politics; it was the fulcrum on which rested the Reactionary lever, the lever which is now happily broken. Major Dreyfus was the victim of the militarist party, but he was also the victim of their ally, the Church party. I bring no charge of direct action against priests or prelates, who were too circumspect to come out into the open, but I cannot help seeing the hand of a Christian Church behind the blow

that struck down the Jew. If the men who so shamefully plotted against him could be classed in any political party without the latter resenting it as an insult, we should find them either Monarchic in tendency or partisans of military dictature brought about by *plébiscite.* M. de Cassagnac (of *l'Autorité*) was an avowed Bonapartist, M. de Kérohan (of *Le Soleil*) a Royalist, M. Arthur Meyer (of *Le Gaulois*) a Royalist, M. E. Drumont (of *La Libre Parole*) an anti-Semite; many others could be quoted among the pressmen who sided against Major Dreyfus, but these suffice, as not one prominent Republican can be found among them. I do not suggest for a moment that these gentlemen were in any degree insincere in the attitude which they took up, but I cannot help noting that all the Reactionaries were solid against Major Dreyfus and that, by degrees, all the Republicans, Radicals and Socialists rallied to his support.

To the Dreyfus case we can trace the movement against the Church, though its incidence is indirect. From this case proceeded an upheaval against militarism; the French, that most military of nations, seeing their liberties imperilled by Cæsarism, boldly turned against their most cherished institution. The struggle was not very acute, for the army was disciplined, steady and ready to obey orders; as regards the officers, malcontents were weeded out in characteristic continental style and not without scandal. In the process, however, it came to light that the malcontent officers were almost invariably devout Catholics: not only were they Reactionaries, which would not have troubled the Government very much, but they were clericals, in league with and supported by the Church. The latter

was ready to fight for its friends and thus the attention of the people was drawn to the fact that the Church was the danger and that the danger had to be faced. In this wise the Dreyfus case powerfully affects the question; matters were further complicated by the feeble attempt made by M. Paul Déroulède to induce General Roget to seize the presidential palace. As is well known, the case ended before the *Haute Cour* or Senate, when M. Déroulède and M. Marcel Habert were sentenced to banishment from which, thanks to an amnesty, they have now returned. Again the French people found that all the persons implicated in the plot were not only Reactionaries but Roman Catholics, indeed, that the terms were practically synonymous. The storm grew in violence and culminated, as we know, in M. Waldeck-Rousseau's bill against the religious orders, followed by M. Combes' violent execution of its provisions, the cancelling of the *Concordat* and the attempts of M. Clémenceau's cabinet to show a firm front and to make the acceptance of a new law possible. Thus has been created a situation bristling with difficulties and uncertainties, with which I shall deal after the last anti-clerical factor has been outlined.

The enemies of the Church have been recruited from among two classes. One is composed of honest Republicans incensed by the attack on their Government, men who were once devout and who, by degrees, forswore their allegiance to the Church; those men abandoned it, as has already been shown, on account of its unsatisfactory attitude. But they kept a warm corner in their hearts for the holy institution; they parted from it rather regretfully and only slowly evolved towards that indifference which leads first to agnosticism and

then to materialism. These men would never have interfered with the Church if the Church had not interfered with them; they were slow to arouse and, at the outset, were more inclined than not to support the priests against their foes, but by degrees they saw the clerical and militarist perils in all their magnitude and rose against them. Nothing has been more instructive in this connection than the attitude of the Left Centre or Moderate Republicans in the Senate; this body is solid and rather conservative and was perhaps inclined to deplore the excesses of the riotous Chamber of Deputies in 1900 and 1901; but to-day we see the same men, after having for some years progressed along the line of their evolution, voting in the same lobby (to use an English term for a different practice in Paris) as militant Socialists. Can a stronger argument be adduced to show what a change has come over the solid classes of France?

But, by itself, this class would have done nothing: it would not have had the necessary driving power to hurl itself against the solid wall of clericalism and wreck it; it supplied a splendid handle for the hammer, but another class had to supply the steel, and that class was the Socialist party. The Socialists and the Extreme Radicals were the principal agents of the downfall of the Church; they do not deny the imputation, in fact, they glory in it and exult in the fact that they have expelled Roman Catholicism from the French cosmos. We must not be biased in the matter, as this is not a question of communism or individualism; the Socialists were not dealing with questions of property, except as regards that of the religious orders; such questions arose only as side issues, as the object of the anti-

clerical campaign was not to capture the comparatively unimportant goods of the Church, but to put it in such a position that it could no longer interfere with the Republic. Therefore, whether the reader be a Socialist or a Tory, he should bear in mind that, as far as the question of Church and State in France is concerned, there need be no difference between Socialists and Republicans in so far as they were working conjointly for political and not for economic ends; opposition to Socialism is founded on economics only, not on politics; in this case we see Socialism figure as a political force and no more.

The Socialist is the enemy of the Church, of all Churches; why this should be is fairly clear, and it appears to be the case in all countries where Socialism is at all powerful. There is nothing in the Christian doctrine that the Socialist cannot accept, and I do not for a moment believe that the doctrine, in all its pristine purity, would have aroused the antagonism of the Socialists, but it has been tortured by sacerdotal practices into an unrecognisable system. Indeed, there is a common saying that Christ was the first Socialist; this, like most common sayings, like that which declares that "we are all Socialists nowadays," is hardly correct and rests upon a misconception. Whether or no we be supporters of Socialism, we should endeavour to understand it and its aims; we shall thus be better fitted to support it or to fight it according to our inclination; in this particular case, there are no grounds for claiming Christ as a Socialist, as there are not many texts in the Bible that can be applied to the community: all aim at the individual, at his attitude in the world, at his ultimate fate; the counsels given there are perfectly

consonant with ideal Socialism, as they are based on perfect love and perfect charity, but there is no suggestion of the modern form of either Communistic or State Socialism.

The fact that there is no inherent objection to a Christian being a Socialist is demonstrated by the existence of a section of Christian Socialists, not only in England, but in Belgium, in Austria, and in France itself; they are not numerous, nor at all powerful, because Christianity, as expounded by the Roman Catholic Church, has ceased to show the external signs of the original doctrine, so that opposition to the Church usually means hatred of Christianity. The Socialist party is practically atheistic, not only because it is led by intellectuals, among whom are numbered many agnostics and materialists, but because it has confounded in a common hatred Christianity and its ministers. I may add that the party does not differentiate and that the Protestant faith and the Jewish religion come under the same ban, in spite of the fact that many of the most enlightened French Socialists are of Semitic origin.

The Socialists, having thus confounded religion and its ministers, found themselves from the outset in conflict with a Church which was no longer a popular institution, but which had a natural leaning towards conservatism. What has already been said amply shows that the Gallic Church is and has always been Reactionary in tendency and even militant in its support of the old *régime:* that is natural enough; it is still more natural for the Church to look upon Socialism with a yet more unfavourable eye. The new idea threatened it from its very inception by its sub-

versive doctrine, its levelling tendency and the pitiless war that it declared against the powerful and the wealthy, against, in fact, the mainstay of the Church; if the clerical party was ready to fight the Republic, how much more ready must it have been to fight Communism! It had everything to lose and nothing to gain by joining forces with Socialism at the start, nothing material, that is: of spiritual profits we will say nothing. Had it been a true Christian Church, poor, lowly and meek in spirit, or militant and burning with anger before the misery of the world, another tale might have been told, but it was a Church of jewels and gold, of music and of crude beauty; it revolted before the prospect of being swamped by the horny-handed sons of toil. And as the Roman Catholic Church, if it had no others, would ever have the virtue of courage, it boldly stood up against the new power: it has been the contest of David and Goliath, but the giant has won.

Thus, the Socialists, seeing before them yet another enemy, determined that they would vanquish it and put in the forefront of their programme the destruction of Christianity itself; the struggle against the Church thus soon resolved itself into a struggle for something greater, for something that could hardly have been attained if the Reactionaries had not supplied the weapons with which they were routed. The alliance of priest and old *régime* is the ladder by which the Socialists have climbed to the pinnacle of political power; solid men of property as well as malcontents of all sorts, the indifferent and the poor, all those who had grievances against the Church flocked to the Socialist rather than to the Republican standard; the one

promised to destroy their enemy, while the other did not as yet advocate it. A sort of storm swept over the country during which the enormous majority of the electors made a step towards extremism; the Socialists increased to such an extent as to enter the Cabinet; the Republicans followed the movement and dubbed themselves Radical-Socialists, practically pledged to vote with the Socialist party. Thus, when the time came to act, towards 1900, supporters of the Church were stifled by numbers and the rest is history.

We all know more or less what has happened: for the last three or four years newspapers and reviews have kept us posted and the reader must have noted how continuously extremism has grown. The religious orders were first of all subjected to State control with the alternative of dissolution; furthermore the property of dissentients was confiscated and, in course of time, even those orders which had submitted saw themselves further chastised and regulated, even the right to teach being withdrawn from them. From 1903 to 1906, extremism maintained its triumphant sway and achieved the cancelling of the *Concordat* and thereby disestablishment; from that time onwards the Roman Catholic Church was doomed. The monetary loss is considerable, yet not so much in itself as because the faithful are no longer numerous or wealthy and are not likely to increase if their purse is to be taxed. The salaries of the priests were small but apparently sufficient when supplemented by their fees; their suppression, coupled with the fact that fees for baptism and marriage services have been made illegal, threw the forty thousand French clerics on the charity of their parishioners: will it last?

The clerics cannot look to the Vatican for help; it is probably embarrassed and impoverished enough as it is without undertaking even a portion of this enormous responsibility; not only has the propaganda been extremely costly, but Peter's Pence can hardly be a tithe of what they were, now that the practically defunct religious orders can no longer contribute.

That is the present position and it is difficult to conceive a more painful one for the Pope and the clergy. The French Government has been called many hard names in the international Press and unfairly enough in most cases. It had to fight for its life, a fact which is not generally admitted, and it therefore applied the first principle of war: if you strike at all, strike hard. No more force was, however, used than was necessary; the attack was progressive and could have been stopped at any moment if the Church had chosen to bend to the storm: it preferred to break and upon its own head be it. Even after the cancelling of the *Concordat*, the State, feeling secure in its victory, was ready to parley with the fallen foe; is it not notorious[1] that in 1906 and 1907, law after law, every one more liberal than the last, was offered to the Papacy and that it rejected them all? Thus was the Government reluctantly compelled to take over the property of the Church; it wanted to disestablish and it was forced to disendow: the rich and powerful French State has no use for cathedrals and manses; we may rest assured, in spite of the charges of cupidity that have been levelled at the Government, that it has no desire to turn them into museums and that such a bait would not have been enough to make it accept the problem of an army of disaffected priests.

[1] See p. 147.

I am aware that, in the eyes of a large section of the British public, the French Government is a monster of iniquity, brutal, grasping and unscrupulous; to that section two points, both important, must be put; in the early part of this chapter I alluded to the present state of the Protestant and the Jewish faiths in France and to the fact that they have not lost their hold upon the masses of their adherents; singularly enough these "iniquitous" laws have not proved unacceptable to any but the Roman Catholic Church; by December 1906, when it was decreed by law that associations must be formed by the faithful to take over the management of Church property, every chapel and synagogue was properly constituted into a legal body. The demand was practically that a body of churchwardens should control the finances of the churches and presbyteries, the incumbents remaining independent and free to obey or not their spiritual chief. Thus, this demand that seemed so gross to the Roman Catholic proved acceptable to the Protestant and the Jew; again I ask, what is this peculiar sanctity that attaches to the Catholic faith that makes it impossible for it to obey the laws that other Churches accept? Is it more devout, more moral? I need not ask the question twice of a Protestant nation; the conclusion must necessarily be that the Church has committed the sin of pride and for that, for that only, does it suffer.

The Roman Catholic Church has not chosen to conform to a law that others accept; he who contravenes the law must be punished and deserves no sympathy. But a stronger case can be made against the Church, against its Prelacy or Popery, whatever men may choose to call it. Compared with other Churches its case is

poor; if we look at it from the inside its weakness is appalling: this brings us to the second point. These iniquitous laws that have called forth these thundering encyclicals, reminiscent of Gregory the Great in their lofty absolutism, of Julius II in their militant fury, these iniquitous laws were submitted in 1906 to the conclave of French Bishops and Archbishops, under the presidency of Cardinal Richard. Private as was the discussion the truth leaked out: the Prelates were not in favour of the law but they were ready to accept it with slight modification. They were willing that "canonical associations," somewhat similar to the legal associations of worship, should be constituted, as suggested by the Archbishop of Besançon; in a word they were anxious for an eirenicon. Thereupon the Pope (or his adviser Cardinal Merry del Val) threw in their faces his absolute veto; with magnificent solidarity the Prelates burned that which they had worshipped and followed the Pope. From that time onwards their loyalty has never for one moment wavered, not a threat of schism having even been whispered; they are ready to face persecution, poverty, exile: *c'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la guerre.*

Let us review briefly the phases of the struggle. In July 1901, the law controlling religious orders was passed; it applied to no less than 21,000 institutions and proposed to compel them to register their rules and to give a yearly account of their expenditure. The Republican party contended, with some show of reason, that, if these objects were purely charitable or educational, as was claimed by the clericals, there could be no objection to submit to investigation. The Government felt that the only means of keeping the orders in check and of preventing them from devoting to political agitation the

vast wealth which they possessed, was to ascertain the origin of their property and the use that was made of it. Nothing could be more legitimate: the State limits the powers of the individual, who may not carry weapons as he thinks fit, nor grow tobacco without a permit, nor compete with the Post Office, etc. In the same manner, and for far more weighty reasons, the State considered itself entitled to ascertain that the operations of the incriminated orders were innocent.

The response was immediate; under instructions from Rome, the religious orders and associations declined to register, with the exception of some four hundred, most of which were disallowed. Whether they feared to divulge their operations or whether they were sacrificed to a principle is uncertain; the fact remains the orders have been broken up, their members exiled or dispersed, and the bulk of their property confiscated. These measures may seem harsh, but the Republic could not afford to trifle with the orders: it was fighting for its life. For this reason M. Combes, whose Government followed on that of M. Waldeck-Rousseau, should be exonerated from blame: he is often charged with having displayed too much energy: it was essential if the 160,000 monks and nuns were to be dealt with successfully.

Even when the orders were dispersed, for very few accepted the law, the back of clerical resistance was not broken. Agitation and even rioting continued so intense that it was found necessary, in December 1905, to disestablish the Church. The Church had been recognised by the *Concordat*, granted by Napoleon I in 1801, a convention by which the Roman Catholic Church benefited to a considerable extent, as the Holy See, through the medium of the Bishops, could partici-

pate in the nomination of incumbents; thus the hierarchical principle, for which the Church is now fighting, was upheld. Moreover, the State supplied the Church with about £1,800,000 per annum and granted pensions to retiring incumbents. The disestablishment of the Church was therefore a serious blow, for it threw upon the faithful the responsibility for the salary of their priests, a responsibility which, by the way, has been accepted cheerfully by Protestants and Jews.

The salaries of the incumbents were stopped, but I would mention, on account of the charges of harsh treatment which have been levelled at the French Government, that pensions were offered to priests aged forty-five or more, whose length of service had attained twenty years. Other incumbents were to receive pensions for four or eight years, according to length of service, so as to give them time to reorganise their lives. The law provided that, in future, the church in each parish and its finances should be administered by an "Association of Worship," comprising at least seven persons, one of whom would naturally be the incumbent. These associations were to take over Church property, after an inventory had been made, after which they were to be allowed to take over the churches too for an indefinite period and to conduct public worship as before, receiving the usual fees; they were not allowed to accumulate capital beyond a certain amount, varying with the size of the parish. The manses could also be held by them for the use of the incumbent at a low rent, payable to the local authority or to the State, according to whether the church in question was a parish church or a cathedral.

These appear moderate proposals, modelled some-

what on the same lines as the arrangements made by our Nonconformist bodies, with the possible infusion of hierarchical influence. Yet they were rejected at once, in spite of the expressed conciliatory feeling of the conclave and the Besançon resolution. The Papacy remained obdurate, in spite of the obvious intention of the Government not to give way when the law came into force in December 1906. No associations were regularly formed, though in some parishes the faithful attempted to register against the wishes of the Church; these groups were not recognised, as the French Government could not give its support to schismatics, but could only enforce the law if Rome accepted it. Rome having proved obdurate, M. Clémenceau's cabinet, and particularly M. Briand, exhausted every resource of diplomacy to meet the Papacy half-way, in spite of the outcry on the part of their more extreme supporters. In January 1907, they offered the Church the *régime* of the Common Law, by assimilating public worship to ordinary meetings, which necessitate solely one declaration every year by the incumbent and two other persons, but the Church has refused to submit even to the ordinary laws of the land, declined to recognise the existence of a temporal government. The Republic has gone even further: though it was impossible to recognise the hierarchy, M. Briand offered the Church a form of contract enabling the incumbent to enter into possession of his church under Common Law, *if authorised to do so by his Bishop*, and even this immense concession has been declined. The Church refuses to be controlled even by the most paternal rule; it wishes to be above the Law and its desires are now realised: it is outside the Law. Soon the churches

may be closed and the most moderate Government that France has known of late years may be compelled to banish and to imprison priests, who will then be nothing but disturbers of the peace. The Republic will be coerced into using force and the entire strength of the Roman hierarchy will be arrayed against it.

The Pope has elected to fight and the Prelates will follow him even in his wildest tilts at the Republican windmills; only one thing has been forgotten and that is the care of the souls of the faithful. The Papacy has accepted martyrdom: that is its right; it has determined to allow agnosticism and atheism to make further inroads upon the masses of the French people: that is its eternal wrong.

In the present state of things, therefore, it is not correct to call the French a nation of atheists; the largest section is neither hot nor cold: for the men of Laodicea there is no salvation; another is violently anticlerical and its allegiance will never be regained: it has tasted the joy of victory and never can it again bow to the routed foe; lastly, there still remains a nucleus of the faithful, the pitiful remnant of a great following, impoverished, despondent, broken in spirit and conscious that the people will never again submit to the rule of a foreign tyrant. The Papacy has lost France for itself, but it has also lost it for Christianity; it had received a sacred trust and that trust has not been fulfilled; upon the Papacy devolved the great and glorious load of the spiritual guidance of a race: it has failed in its task as it has failed with Italy, as it is failing with Germany and Spain. The burden must be transferred to other shoulders, while the Church makes ready to give an account of its charge; when that account is demanded, what will the answer be?

CHAPTER VIII

SOCIALISM

BEFORE considering to what extent Socialism has developed under the Republic, it is essential to arrive at a correct idea of the meaning of this much-misused word. The giving of a correct definition and the intelligent application of the term "Socialism" do not in any way affect the position of partisans or opponents of the system; the former of course rarely misunderstand its meaning, but the latter do, more often than not, out of sheer ignorance and sometimes affect to do so for the purpose of discrediting the thing they detest. Such ignorance is painful, especially when we know how simple the socialistic theories are; as regards those who misrepresent the enemy for party purposes, they are, of course, beneath consideration.

Though considerable light has, during the past two or three years, been shed upon the theory of Socialism, owing to the successes of Labour candidates at the polls, there appears to remain a considerable section of the public who have no idea of the basis of Socialism and who invest it with a variety of shadowy terrors; they affix the label indiscriminately to any measure that provokes their opposition because it touches their pocket. Thus we have even seen "Small Holdings" denounced on this plea, an entertaining fact when we

remember that the scheme proposes to create peasant proprietors by the million.

Roughly speaking, Socialism is based on a single principle: *The nationalisation or municipalisation of all means of production, distribution and exchange.* Socialism proposes to extend, for the benefit either of the State or of the municipalities, the system that now prevails with respect to the Post Office, the Crown Lands, municipal tramways, etc. The Socialists propose to absorb private enterprise by purchase and to control it for the benefit of the community. Were this completely effected, all men would automatically become government officials. It is contended by the party that all profits, if any, becoming the property of the community, it would be possible to manufacture exactly enough to supply the needs of the world and to reduce the hours of labour all round; on the other hand it is maintained that the suppression of the prospect of private gain would do away with initiative and that industries would therefore deteriorate.

It would be possible to attack the arguments of both parties, because Socialism presupposes the existence of men trained on different lines from ourselves, but there is no reason to take sides in the matter here. I only wish to define exactly the meaning of the word "Socialism," as understood by those who support it; the necessity for this is apparent when we remember how widespread is the fallacy contained in the following argument: "*If we were to divide* all the wealth of this world among its inhabitants, the intelligent and the thrifty would in a very short time concentrate it again in their hands." The absurdity of this hypothesis is clearly seen when we remember that the avowed aim

of the Socialist party is so far from being "equal division" that it tends to the absorption by the State of such private property as exists at the present time.

We should also remember that all manufacturing, commercial or banking operations conducted by the State are Socialism; thus, as is mentioned above, the Post Office, State railways (in Germany, for instance), Government public-houses (Russia), municipal tramways, tenements and milk supply, etc., are all of the pure type of State Socialism. The necessity for this remark arises from the fact that many of these old-established businesses receive support from bitter opponents of Socialism; I do not intend to develop the case either for or against them, but we must not lose sight of the truth.

This brief analysis of the nature of Socialism being finished, let us now examine the position of the Socialist party in France and try to arrive at its most characteristic features. Though the doctrine has developed in favourable ground, we must divest ourselves of the idea that France, the land of the red Radicals, is the centre of the Socialistic world; though the total of the votes cast for advanced candidates is an imposing one, we must note that it does not amount to much more than a quarter of the total poll, whilst in Germany about one-half of the votes recorded went to the Social Democrats, who are all either avowed Socialists or of more pronounced views than the most advanced Radicals. The fact is that even the *sans-culottes* who executed Louis XVI had a very keen respect for individual property; the tradition of the Declaration of the Rights of Man was not mocked at that time and has survived to this day. The Revolution was simply

the turning of the tables by the "under dog" on the "top dog"; had the people been well governed, taxed only in moderation and tried equitably in the Courts of Law, there would have been no upheaval and a Bourbon might be sitting on the French throne at the present time. Nor was there any Socialistic inspiration in 1789 or in 1792; Socialism is an importation, coming mainly from Germany in the shape of Carl Marxism, and, if it has developed, it is in virtue of social conditions and not owing to any national bent of mind.

Socialism is an economic system; its adoption demands from its adherents either fervent idealism or a very clear appreciation of their personal interests. Above all, a good Socialist must have a fully developed sense of solidarity, a capacity for understanding his fellow-men and for banding himself successfully with them; he must be able to refrain from asserting his individuality. It is for this reason that Germany, the land in which everything resolves itself in societies, from theology to gymnastics, has seen an extensive development of the Socialistic movement; it is this fact also that induces one to believe that the party has before it an immense future in Great Britain, where trade unions flourish and team games are the rule. But this is not so emphatically the case in France, owing to certain characteristics which the French possess in common with other Latin races. As will be shown further on, trade unions are fairly powerful in France, but far less so than, for instance, in Great Britain; their members do not in every case support them with much enthusiasm, because organised effort is not very much to their taste. The French are a nation of individualists; they do not take kindly to group

action because it deprives them of the opportunity of coming to the fore. It is for this reason that they do not succeed in team games such as cricket or football; every man in the team plays for himself and disorder naturally follows.

Let me again quote the saying that "the dream of every Frenchman is to be his neighbour's President"; it is not an ignoble ambition, but it summarises the position as regards Socialism. Every man pursues his object without regard for the group to which he may belong, whether it be the State or the municipality; thus, local affairs awake far less interest in France than they do even in the busiest British towns. If so large a proportion of the voters as one-quarter gave their votes to Socialist or Socialistic candidates, it is because the working population, captained by the young "intellectuals," realises that Socialism is a weapon against the moneyed class; hence they use it, but do not love it, because it is foreign to the Latin character.

A large proportion of the French nation is composed of persons possessing very small estates, ranging between five acres and fifty acres, i.e. small holdings; nearly one-half of the population is employed on the land, as opposed to about ten per cent in England and Wales. Among this class Socialism spreads very slowly, partly because agriculturists are invariably suspicious of new ideas and partly because their education is imperfect. If we add to these, government officials, persons of independent means, the professions and commerce, we find that only thirty-five per cent of the population are employed industrially. It is notorious that Collectivism spreads readily among industrial workers and mainly among that class; thus it is easy

to understand that there are limits to the propagation of the doctrine, owing to the comparatively small number of the artisans; this is not the case in Great Britain and particularly in industrial England.

The agriculturist loves the land, which he usually owns, and would scout the idea of becoming a farmer under the State, which would be his position under a Socialistic *régime;* he is frugal, hard-working and thrifty to the point of avarice, but intolerably narrow, suspicious and bigoted. Among this class Socialism can hardly make proselytes, nor can it do so to any great extent among tradesmen and commercial men, who are either their own masters or who hope to set up for themselves when they have amassed a small capital. We therefore find ourselves reduced to two classes, the artisans and the professions, and it is among these that we must seek the Socialist voters of France.

The reader will note at once that the professions have been quoted as amongst the opponents of Socialism, and that they are now put down as partisans. In France the professions are in the main antagonistic to the movement; in all countries learning makes for advanced opinions, and France is no exception: her lawyers, teachers and doctors are invariably Republicans, except when they belong by birth to the aristocratic class. But they emphatically oppose the Socialist movement because they belong to the moneyed classes and realise, the lawyers that under Socialism their occupation would be gone and the doctors and other men of learning that their individual advancement would be menaced. As a class, therefore, we may take it for granted that they will oppose the spread of

Socialist tenets however solidly faithful they may remain to the Republic. Reaction has no charms for men whose learning induces in them contempt for hereditary rights and shakes their belief in elementary religion; there, however, they stop short, in great part because they are not yet convinced that Socialism has power to heal social evils.

Yet this class supplies an important factor of the movement: the greater part of the leaders. Here we find a noteworthy difference between French and British Socialism, for the latter tends to exclude all who are not artisans. The Social Democratic Federation does not offer to politicians tempting enough prospects to induce them to desert the Extreme Radical wing; the Fabian Society does not as yet put candidates in the field. In Great Britain the Socialist party fights shy of leaders who do not belong to the artisan class, and this is a source both of strength and of weakness; on the one hand the working-man candidate can make a far more powerful appeal to his fellows than a smooth-tongued young barrister and is much more likely to be trusted by them. Against this we must set the fact that it is extremely difficult to find among trade unionists men whose education and outlook are sufficiently broad to qualify them for leadership. If the whole of the world were converted to Socialism, this difficulty would not exist; but if we accept the prevailing state of things we find that men are needed who are competent to deal with diplomatic, military and financial matters. These are hardly as yet found in the ranks of labour, so that its representatives do not always figure to advantage when these questions come to the fore.

This state of things does not prevail in France. There we find, as in Great Britain, the rank and file of the Socialist party composed of the workers of the towns, with this difference that in France trade unionists are practically all Socialists, and that the bulk of the Socialist vote is cast by non-organised forces which, in this country, would probably swell the Liberal total. But if the rank and file are in both countries recruited from the same class, the choice of leaders does not proceed on the same lines. In Great Britain it is unusual for a candidate to stand for a constituency without some local backing; thus each interest is sponsored by a single candidate, whose election depends upon the local association. This state of things is due to the fact that there is in Great Britain no second ballot, so that it becomes essential to obviate the splitting of votes. In France this danger does not exist, so that any number of candidates can stand for a single seat without risking the loss of it for their party. The trade unions do not therefore as a rule find it necessary to choose a candidate for whom its members are instructed to vote; they may do so, but as often as not the nominee is not an artisan but a member of the professional classes of whose soundness there is no question.

It cannot be said that there is no class antagonism in France; indeed, it is keener than in Great Britain; to call a man a *bourgeois* is an insult; but the Socialists find it advantageous to adopt as leaders men of education, such as barristers or journalists, who will represent them worthily in and out of Parliament. Such men may well be recruited from among the ranks of Labour, as is demonstrated by the speeches and

writings of such men as Mr. John Burns, Mr. Keir Hardie, Mr. D. J. Shackleton, Mr. F. W. Jowett, etc., but they are the exception not the rule, and even they are inclined to narrow their outlook, which naturally makes for the weakness of a Socialist State among non-Socialist countries. In France, thanks to the fact that members of Parliament are paid, the professional classes are available for the recruiting of labour leaders; indeed, the younger section is naturally attracted to the Socialist standard. As regards this particular class, we can find in Great Britain no parallel. In this country, generally speaking, the youth of the nation do not take any great interest in politics; they may demonstrate against some cause which they dislike in spite of their often not having honoured it with an examination of its merits, but young Britons appear to be too busy with their sports or social pleasures to study political questions, so that we can hardly compare them with the continental *Intellectuels.*

The *Intellectuel* is essentially a product of modern Europe and is principally to be found in France, Germany and Russia. He is almost invariably highly educated, in sympathy with foreign progress, a humanitarian and imbued with ideas either somewhat or very much ahead of his time. The French *Intellectuel* is at his best in the twenties; he may then be quixotic, but he generally knows his subject and is fired with generous enthusiasms. It is from among this class of energetic young thinkers, powerfully influenced by Ruskin, Ibsen, Björnson, Marx, Gorki, etc., varied as these schools of thought may be, that many of the most powerful Socialist writers and speakers are being recruited. The young *Intellectuel* becomes a Socialist

(if not even a philosophical Anarchist) when at his university and, by the time he has reached the age of twenty-five, which it will be remembered is the lowest limit for membership of the Chamber of Deputies, he is practically ready to be either a fighting member or a pungent and scholarly journalist.

This curious factor must never be lost sight of when the Socialist movement in any European country is examined. In Great Britain members of the educated classes almost invariably belong to one of the two great political parties, but in France they are willing to join hands with the masses, not only as leaders but with a view to the true enthronement of the people. It is probably for this reason that the Socialist party has made so much headway in France; the educated classes have been placated by seeing their friends co-operate with the workers. The "class-war" attitude is coming into being and with that I shall deal further on, but that is hardly the source to which we can trace the progress of Socialism in France up to the present time; it is rather due to the discontent of the people, who are wisely led by men whose education has fitted them for the task. It should be said in passing that the Jews have played a considerable part in the development of Socialism in France. Whether this be due to the persecution to which they have at some time been subjected in all European countries, a persecution which has not yet slackened in Central and Eastern Europe, or whether the race is naturally revolutionary, I will not attempt to decide. However, the chances are that the Jews are at least as law-abiding as any section of the Christian population but, since they are as a rule intellectually superior as a class to the Christians with whom they are

compared, they naturally act as the leaven that causes social unrest. The Jews are either prosperous and conservative or poor and revolutionary; their intelligence and indomitable energy have bred in them the faculty of discrimination; whereas Christians, be they ever so poor and degraded, dully and despairingly accept the *status quo.* The Jews usually seek a means of emerging from the lower depths, either individually or as a class. Socialism may or may not be a panacea, but it certainly holds out to the poorest prospects that no other political creed can offer; I neither support nor attack it here, but can only say that the growth of Socialism is not surprising, indeed, it is strange that it should not yet have grown still more.

But this phenomenon is not confined to France; in Great Britain, particularly in the East End of London, the forces of the Anarchists and Socialists are usually captained by foreign Jews; this is not singular, as I have tried to show above, nor is it confined to any one country. What is peculiar to French Socialism is that many of the leaders of the movement and of the *Intellectuels* are young Jews belonging to very wealthy families. The British equivalent of these, who approximate far more closely, of course, to their fellows than does the British Christian to the French, is usually Conservative in politics, sometimes Liberal and very rarely Socialistic. Caste distinctions and the "class-war" attitude of the militant Socialists may be answerable for this state of things. In France, where class distinctions are not very powerful, the young Jew naturally takes to the new ideas and, his cleverness and quickness aiding him, usually rises from the ranks. It is not impossible that his heredity of suffering and per-

secution may contribute to the readiness with which he revolts ; it is not against the Jew to say so, for it is not the spirit of the model ratepayer that breeds Hampdens, but the spirit of revolt.

Such being the soldiers and officers who march under the Red Flag, it is not surprising that their political organisation should have grown so powerful. The Socialist party has hardly suffered from the ups and downs of political life; every election has sent it back to power with a greater number of seats to its credit ; at the present time the party has 74 representatives in the Chamber of Deputies, to whom we must add, in certain cases, 135 Radical Socialists. The only cause of weakness proceeds from the divisions in the Socialist camp, between the members who are willing to co-operate with other parties and those who will not hear of any connection with *bourgeois* ministries, however advanced; the position is exactly similar to that with which we are confronted in Great Britain, where we find the Labour Party divided into the uncompromising Socialists belonging to the Independent Labour Party, the Labour candidates of Socialistic tendencies and the trade-union members. These divisions have, however, no practical results in France, as the electoral system allows of several Socialists standing, when of course, if a second ballot is necessary, the rest withdraw in favour of the leader of the poll. As a result, we find that the "Unified Socialists" of the uncompromising type hold 53 seats, and the Independent Socialists 21 ; if we add these two figures to the 135 Radical Socialists, we find that they form a considerable portion of the 591 members. Though they have not an absolute majority, the weight of

these 209 advanced votes is such as to colour very strongly modern legislation, and there is no reason to doubt that their progress will continue up to a certain point.

If we consider the Socialist strength in the country, we arrive at still more striking results. In 1906, 366,098 votes were cast for Independent Socialists, 717,084 for Unified Socialists and 1,265,985 for Radical Socialists. We arrive thus at a total of, say, 2,350,000 voters of very advanced views, or over 26 per cent of the total poll. This is an amazing figure, and should give food for thought to those who believe that Socialism can be disregarded ; possibly it has its limits, but they are not so narrow as to deprive the system of immense influence. How far Socialism will spread in France is of course a matter of guess-work; the total Socialist vote so utterly eclipses the figures of trade-union membership that they can afford us no indications. About 35 per cent of the population are employed in industry ; if we add to this figure the 10 per cent employed in commerce, we find that the result does not equal even half the population. Unless Socialism develops very considerably among the agriculturists, which does not appear very likely at present, we cannot expect to see Socialism spread to very much more than 45 per cent of the voters, or less than half.

Where the increase of power is already being felt is, however, not so much in the country as in the party. The extreme elements are gaining ground; in the figures given above, clear distinctions are made between the three principal sections. The Radical Socialists, who polled about one-half of the advanced vote, are sometimes Socialists masquerading as Radicals and

sometimes Radicals masquerading as Socialists; in either case they are always willing to co-operate with Republican and Radical cabinets; they infuse into them advanced tendencies, but they are not sufficiently uncompromising to decline office. This is the section the disappearance of which will clear the issue between Socialists and *bourgeois;* the Radical Socialists are somewhat in the position of the Liberals in Great Britain, whose fate it appears to be to be squeezed out of existence between Toryism and Labour. It is among these that the uncompromising "Unified Socialists" will in future find recruits, as they grow more advanced, as well as among the Independent Socialists. But should their total poll remain undiminished by the inevitable defection of the Radical section of the Radical Socialist party, should it even swell to such an extent as to embrace the whole of the industrial and commercial classes, which is very unlikely, the total membership of the Socialist party in the Chamber of Deputies would be less than half the House.

We are therefore driven to the conclusion that the hopes of the uncompromising section in the future lie firstly in the absorption of the more moderate section and secondly in the conversion of the agricultural class; how far this is possible no one can tell. It is difficult, but the spread of education may assist them powerfully. At any rate it can be confidently stated that the fortunes of the party are certainly not on the wane and that every circumstance, every fluctuation of opinion, brings new recruits to the movement.

Socialism has in France the same advantage that has proved so important in Germany—the remarkably keen interest with which the public follows the development

of the Socialist movement. Not only are Socialist newspapers numerous and assured of a good circulation, and Socialist pamphlets and leaflets found everywhere, but a large number of the latest books are devoted to social questions. The distinction that is made in Great Britain between social and Socialistic schemes does not obtain in France, where the people are divided in horizontal strata: the measures that are to benefit the poor are Socialistic and the measures that are to favour the well-to-do are anti-Socialistic. Schemes such as Garden Cities, Model Villages, Co-operative Societies, which enjoy in Great Britain the support of both parties, are in France looked upon as frankly Socialistic. Thus, the author who attacks a problem such as alcoholic degeneracy, the housing of the poor, etc., is almost invariably a Socialist or deals with the question on Socialistic lines.

In the greater number of serious books published in France during the last ten years, inclusive of those dealing with foreign politics or science, we find this tendency to identify Socialism with social betterment; this has not in France the unfortunate effects that it would have in Great Britain, where social schemes receive the support of the rich. In France the rich are few, and even the well-to-do classes are far less generous and public-spirited than they are in England. If the distinction did not exist in Great Britain, such organisations as the Trust Public House Association or the Garden City Association would soon be starved out, as the rich would not assist groupings with "Socialistic" tendencies. In France, however, the wealthy do but little in this direction, even hospitals being the care of the State; thus it lies with the Socialistic parties to

struggle for the betterment of social conditions and they naturally reap the credit of the reforms. When we recollect how much talk there is at the present time in Great Britain of land questions, graduated income tax, housing, etc., we gather what an inmense asset the coupling of the word "Socialistic" with these schemes is to the Socialist party.

Since the *bourgeois* are sluggish in the matter, the militant Socialists are the sole movers and all the literature on the subject naturally turns to their advantage; add to this the fact that the drama makes an even more pressing appeal and that the playwright is often a tribune in disguise, and a great part of the success of French Socialism will be understood. The Socialists have established a quasi-monopoly of social questions; this is not the case in Great Britain, where both the great parties are anxious, in a greater or lesser degree, to improve social conditions, the Radical wing being of course the more energetic, and where, therefore, the Labour party are deprived of the great advertisement that falls to the lot of their colleagues oversea.

Authors, speakers and playwrights range, of course, over a very wide field; all the "social" interested are more or less Socialistic, but their theories are varied and range between Anarchism and pastoral Socialism, including scientific and singular varieties. In the main, however, French Socialism has three characteristics which are never absent from the works of its supporters —anti-clericalism, anti-militarism, and humanitarianism.

With the exception of the Christian Socialists, who are a negligible force, not even possessing one member in the Lower House, French Socialists are almost invariably atheists; they do not stop at agnosticism, nor

even at anti-clericalism, but, regarding as they do the teaching and practice of any religion as superstition, they violently inveigh against it. I do not intend to defend the view, but can well understand how it comes to be held by so many Frenchmen; had the Roman Catholic Church been amenable to progress, had it above all not insisted on the hierarchy and class distinctions, it would never have excited in the hearts of so many of the people the hatred that there exists. If we cannot excuse the Socialist party, we can well understand it; it found the Roman Catholic Church standing in its way as an ally of the rich and naturally classed it as an enemy. Socialists were not deceived by its pseudo-democracy but saw in it the champion of ignorance and autocracy and started out to slay it as such; they have been the prime movers in its present, and not undeserved abasement and may eventually succeed in rooting it out. Education does not make for belief until it is so far advanced as to leave the pupil face to face with the Incomprehensible; in the earlier stages, education naturally makes for philosophic doubt. Thus the spread of learning, which is far greater in France than in Great Britain, has struck a fatal blow at the Church and at the same time at religion; whether the present-day Socialists are the ancestors of a highly educated race who will return to belief when they have exhausted the sum total of human knowledge, even a utopist would hesitate to predict. One thing is certain, and that is that a return to religious belief will not be a return to the fold of the Roman Catholic Church, unless that Church be modified beyond recognition.

It is not impossible that atheism among French Socialists is traceable, not only to the native and

foreign philosophers whose works serve the party as text-books, but also to the fact that the movement is usually led by Freemasons, Free-thinkers and Jews. We must remember that French Freemasonry is a very different organisation from the one that exists in Great Britain, where it does not necessarily exclude religious belief. I do not, of course, pretend to know whether the secret statutes of the French Freemasons preclude a member from professing a creed, but the fact remains that the forces of the lodges have been cast in the balance against the Roman Catholic Church. Add to this the influence of the Jewish *Intellectuels* and it will be readily understood how naturally the Socialist party has been marshalled against Romanism.

The fight against the Church has naturally enough extended to a struggle with clericals of all sorts; thus the army itself has been drawn into the vortex. Its very existence is distasteful to the Socialist party, which in all countries is naturally an anti-militarist group. Socialism, by virtue of its conception of nationality, is in itself opposed to war, so that armies can only appear to it in the light of useless or noxious institutions. The remarkable spread of anti-militarism among the Socialists and their political allies, the advanced Radicals, is remarkable when we remember how warlike the French race is; their history is richer in wars than that of any important European nation, but the fact that wars have always been popular in France is explained by the habit of victory contracted by French armies. From the days of François I to those of the war with Germany, with but few interludes of defeat, provided as a rule by British gold and by British men, the military career of France has ever been a glorious

one, whether her sons, marched under the lilies, the eagle or the tricolour. Thus the nation became naturally warlike; a large section of the people, mainly the peasantry, took but little interest in these matters, but the more turbulent townsmen were ever ready for the fray on the slightest provocation.

The defeats of 1870 seem, however, to have powerfully contributed to the moderating of these restless spirits; the war was so short and so ruthless, the disaster so appalling and utter, that a subtle, pre-natal influence appears to have rooted out of the French the lust for battle. After that terrible year, the nation sighed for peace and for time to rebuild its ruined homesteads; reconstruction was rapid, so rapid that even before M. Thiers, the "Liberator of the Land," had finished his work, prosperity was returning to France and that, a few years later, Germany, seeing her quondam foe recover beyond all expectation, seriously considered another onslaught. But returning wealth and power were not followed by a recrudescence of militarism; except among those who had seen the German scythe drawn across the fields of France, animosity lay dormant, and it has, since then, never wakened to action. True, the two nations are not on friendly terms, but there is no question of even a smouldering volcano: France no longer concerns herself with the lost provinces.

Such being the "non-military" attitude of the great mass of the people, no serious opposition has ever been offered to the anti-militarist agitation of the Socialist party. The "Nationalist" party attempted, during the Dreyfus proceedings, to revive public feeling, but their efforts only ended in total defeat, a fortunate occurrence in view of the irresponsible and hostile

attitude that they adopt towards all foreign powers. The "Nationalists" are the party of war, of colonial adventure, of wanton aggression against the foreigner for no other reason than because he is the foreigner. They are the sworn foes of the Socialists, and all true lovers of peace will welcome their defeat, even at the hands of a party which they fear.

The principal exponents of anti-militarism are doubtless M. Hervé, M. Urbain Gohier and M. Anatole France. The first is a professor who carried even into the class-room his hatred for militarism in any form. For this M. Hervé was dismissed and has since become a force in the country, whose lead is followed by the more active section of the party. M. Anatole France, on the other hand, is a journalist and writer of the highest attainments, whose influence is considerable, thanks to his literary gifts. But, though these names occur to me immediately in connection with anti-militarism apart from Socialism, practically every Socialist leader is an opponent of the army; it is very doubtful whether all their supporters are of the same mind, but the great majority would certainly endorse any action taken by their chiefs.

It is noteworthy that the recent split between Radicals and Socialists was caused by this very question, but it is not likely to be permanent, for the less violent section of the Socialist party, as represented by MM. Jaurès, Allemane, Guesde, Brousse, de Préssensé, Vaillant, etc., acknowledge that under present conditions it is impossible to dispense with armies and navies; they realise that non-simultaneous disarmament would only mean the rapid annexation or partition of France and her incorporation into a powerful military system

utterly opposed to their ideals. The more advanced section of the anti-militarists view this prospect with equanimity, as they expect to propagate their doctrine among the people, whoever the ruler may be; they do not realise that this is a fallacy, as the acceptance of militarism would only be putting back the clock.

To the anti-militarist programme of the moderate Socialists, however, sympathy cannot be refused. Roughly speaking, it consists in accepting the *status quo*, in working diligently for disarmament in conjunction with similar foreign parties, and more especially in the cementing of an understanding with foreign democracies. Disarmament would, of course, be viewed with favour by most men of enlightened views, but it is practically impossible to hope for it as long as one nation, and that is Germany, still cherishes ambitions of world-power. The German desire for expansion is perfectly normal; the position of this Empire, practically coastless, threatened with hostile tariffs abroad, and blessed or cursed with an ever-increasing population, is an anomaly. Territorial expansion is a necessity for Germany if nationality is to remain the basis of government. It is this fact which the Socialists recognise so clearly, and it explains their efforts to suppress the national idea and to root out the prejudices that exist against the foreigner.

The spread of Socialistic theories makes for peace, and the party hopes to attain its ends, before even it has converted more than a portion of the world, by this understanding between democracies mentioned above. The scheme is simple enough; Socialists are to be grouped in each country under a central organisation which, when powerful enough, will be able to control

governments or, in the meantime, to make treaties of neutrality with other democracies. Thus would be constituted a state within the State; it might ultimately become sufficiently strong to suppress war by vetoing the levies of working men, who must inevitably supply the bulk of the "food for powder," or "gunflesh" as the French pithily call it. The scheme may appear impracticable, as he who wields military power for the time being would always be able to remove the Executive of the Democracy; moreover the divisions that must inevitably arise in the Socialist camp, in most countries, would always militate against the constitution of a strong central organisation. However remote may be the prospect of friendly democracies agreeing to abstain from war, we must admit that the ever-increasing influence of the Socialists makes for peace. The attitude of British Labour is not yet quite clear on this point, mainly because it has not yet entirely thrown off its connection with trade unionism; when it decides to do so and its candidates openly declare themselves Socialists, it is practically certain that it will fall into line with the following of M. Jaurès and M. Bebel.

Pacific action of this nature will be easy in France because the tendency of the party is apparently towards State Socialism; if it were towards Municipalism or Collectivism, dreams of disarmament would be dreams indeed, as there would be but little cohesion between component parts of the State. We are often told that State Socialism is in disgrace, but there is hardly any alternative when the people take no interest in local affairs; moreover it is most easily put into practice, owing to the vast resources which the State controls.

It is for this reason that, from the chaos in which many earnest Socialists are plunged, emerges a strong section of State Socialists who know what they want and how to attain their ends. The usual charge levelled at State Socialism is nowhere more appropriate than it is in France; the rock on which it must infallibly break, according to the opponents of Socialism, is the over-centralisation of government and the concomitant creation of an all-powerful bureaucracy. There is probably no country in the world where government is so centralised in the capital as it is in France; local authorities look for guidance to the Paris Executive and not to local opinion, unless the latter be controlled by a caucus; matters of the importance of the parish pump pass through a complicated series of inquiries made by the *sous-préfets* (local executives) and *préfets*, whose decision is usually subordinated to the orders of Ministers. Thus, it may be concluded that this strong organisation, the origin of which is due to the first Napoleon, has so deeply influenced the French for the last hundred years as to make them naturally inclined towards bureaucratic government. The mind of the people is therefore fairly well prepared for the acceptance of State Socialism.

In view of the foregoing it is not extraordinary that, along with agitation in favour of the usual necessary means of social progress, such as old age pensions, graduated income tax, compulsory insurance, etc., there is a strong movement towards general nationalisation. In Great Britain the tendency is to municipalise everything; in France nationalisation appears simpler. How both these systems can be reconciled with the temperament of the people is easily understood when we see

how the British interest in local affairs goes hand in hand with municipalisation, whilst the French apathy in this respect enhances the attractions of State Socialism.

The French Government has, moreover, a solid basis for nationalisation, as it is already in possession of monopolies of very great importance. It is opportune to recall here that State Socialism embraces "any profitable operation undertaken by the State in competition with or to the exclusion of private enterprise"; this must be understood in its widest sense, such systems as the Post Office or the British shareholding in the Suez Canal being consistent with State Socialism. The Republic has, of course, the monopoly of postal carriage and of the telegraphic system, to which are added the telephones, but it has more solid and typical assets even than these. In the first place, we have the tobacco and lucifer match monopolies, some of the most valuable in the world, as they yield about £18,000,000 per annum or nearly 12 per cent of the average expenditure of the State. Of course the origin of the tobacco monopoly must be traced to Napoleon I, who was certainly not a Socialist, and who established it only because his business-like mind saw in it a valuable and not oppressive source of revenue. In this case Napoleon I was a Socialist *sans le savoir*, just as may be the peaceful citizen who supports municipal tramways. The industry is practically in the hands of the State; no tobacco may be grown without official sanction or free from supervision, nor may the produce be sold to any but the State; government factories undertake the preparation of all tobaccos and government shops retail them to the public. This monopoly is, therefore, an ideal instance of Socialism, for the State

plays the rôle both of manufacturer and merchant; as it makes very substantial profits and produces a good article[1] at fair rates, it serves as a valuable instance of the possibilities of State Socialism.

Playing-cards are also a monopoly, but no particular interest attaches to it; it is also profitable but yields in interest to the more important asset represented by the forest lands. The forests of France are in the hands of the State to the extent of about sixty per cent of their total area; they were appropriated by the Government when the clergy and the aristocrats were dispossessed of them by the Revolution, since when they have always remained in the hands of the *départements* or of the State. They cannot be compared with the British Crown Lands, the income from which, according to Mr. C. S. Jones (in the *World's Work*), averages half a million per annum. Ten per cent of the total area of France is wooded, so that the State is in possession of some six per cent of the soil; if we add to the forest the national estates, which are not numerous, we arrive at a total yearly net yield of £2,300,000, a far larger figure than similar property produces in this country. It should be mentioned, as a side issue, that an additional advantage is derived from the power thus vested in the State, to control afforestation and to prevent the reckless felling of timber practised in England and Scotland to the prejudice of climate and agriculture.

These two great monopolies form the basis on which the machinery of French State Socialism rests. Those inclined to increase its scope turn naturally towards the railway system, part of which is already in the hands of

[1] I refer to tobacco only; for unknown reasons matches are in France both bad and dear.

the Government. These lines pay their way and make a small profit on low rates, in spite of their being the inheritance of bankrupt companies. In course of time, between 1950 and 1960, owing to the terms of their concessions, the existing companies will transfer all their property to the State, which will then be in possession of a splendid system, well co-ordinated and extending over twenty-five thousand miles. The tendency is however already making itself felt, as the buying out of the companies has been several times proposed, and a Bill is even now before Parliament to provide for a beginning with the *Compagnie de l'Ouest.*

Roughly speaking, any highly centralised industry is suitable for State Socialism; when a trust has crushed out competition and has spread over the whole of the country, nothing is easier than to install the State as controller. No objection can be taken to the process, if it be possible to secure efficient management, an easy matter if the State be ready to pay the price. Such systems as the Russian monopoly of the liquor traffic are both health-giving and profitable, whether their tendency be Socialistic or not.

With these remarks on State Socialism we may close this chapter. The foregoing observations cannot but lead the reader to understand that Socialism is in France a very vigorous force; I do not deny that it is divided against itself, as is always the case in advanced parties: the discord that reigns among British Liberals is an instance of the fact. The parties that group the more democratic sections of the people invariably attract, not only the reformer, but the crank who has specialised in a subject and whose views accord thereupon with those of the party but differ on other questions. This

is a source of weakness, as it can at any time provoke a cleavage, but it is inevitable and only tends to prove that the adherents of the advanced parties have views of their own which they are anxious to uphold, instead of following submissively the lead of their chief. Moreover, little by little the more extreme section asserts itself and absorbs the more advanced portion of its immediate neighbour; then, after a period of quiescence, the process is repeated, and the party views are restated. We see the process in Great Britain where Whig electors slowly evolve towards either Toryism or Radicalism and where the trade unions are being drawn into the fold of the Socialist party. In France, the Unified Socialists, with their understandable programme of independent action and "no co-operation" as a shibboleth, are absorbing the weaker and more undecided groups; in course of time they will have mustered all their available strength, when we shall assist at the struggle, no longer between parties the hues of which are near neighbours on the political spectrum, but between, on the one hand, the Republican party as a representative of individualism and, on the other, the massed forces of the Socialist party. What education and evolution may hold in reserve for the French Republic I do not profess to predict, but there is no doubt that extremism is at present at a premium and its success, though not yet in sight, may well exceed the most sanguine expectations of its most earnest exponents.

CHAPTER IX

TRADE UNIONISM AND CO-OPERATION

IF we accepted the broadest interpretation of the term "Socialism," the chapter on Socialism in France should have included details on the above subjects. Trade Unionism is not in itself Socialistic and Co-operation is even less so, but both are so closely allied to Socialism that they are often identified with it. They are in a sense, whether their promoters know it or not, steps leading up to the larger policy of Socialism, and those who support their principles are generally in the end drawn towards Collectivism.

Except for this, Trade Unionism and Co-operation have but little in common and are grouped under a common heading only because their supporters are recruited from the same class; we may therefore proceed to consider them separately, beginning with Trade Unionism.

The origin of Trade Unions is rarely traceable to Socialistic propaganda, except in the case of those which have been formed during the last decade; as regards these, Socialists found it easier to induce the workers to join a Trade Union than a Socialist league, just as certain "Labour" candidates in Great Britain find that label more acceptable than that of "Socialist." In France, as in Great Britain, the older and more

powerful Unions were at their inception intended to advance the interests of the workers, to obtain for them shorter hours, higher wages and better conditions of labour, and to provide them with medical attendance and other assistance when sick or unemployed. Trade Unions were and are to this day great friendly societies and can boast of much creditable work; the Trade Unionist is usually the pick of the working class; this may be because the Unions are only flourishing among skilled workmen, but it is more probably due to the fact that the education in the principles of solidarity and mutual help that is thus given the unit raises him above the plane of his fellow-workers.

In Great Britain, this state of things prevails to this day, though there are obvious signs that the Socialistic spirit is slowly permeating the Unions and bids fair to transform them into political machines; yet, the main object of Trade Unions is still the provision of their members with benefits, to which should be added labour bureaux and, in certain cases, old age pension and building schemes. In France, Trade Unionism is seen in a rather different light. Benefits to members are not the principal object of combination, because the thrifty and frugal French workman, blessed in most cases with a domesticated and intelligent wife, is wise enough not to dissipate his earnings; there is no need to lay to the charge of the British workman those vices with which the middle classes systematically credit him. I do not deny, in view of the exhaustive investigation which preceded the writing of a previous volume,[1] that the British workman is often drunken and thriftless, but drunkenness and thriftlessness are to a certain

[1] *Engines of Social Progress*, A. & C. Black, 1907.

extent British and cold-country traits from which the middle classes are not exempt; if such appalling squalor prevails in our great cities, if so many members of the working classes are vicious and drunken, it is mainly because housing conditions are so indescribably bad and because lax and unintelligent application of the licensing laws has resulted in the multiplication of pitfalls. We cannot here enter into a full comparison of French and British workmen, as this would necessitate an analysis of the national character; it is, however, easy to show how the position in which workers of both nations are placed has influenced their attitude towards Trade Unionism. The housing question exists in French as well as in English towns, but to a lesser degree; in rural districts difficulties on this score are practically unknown. As regards the cities, the reason is not far to seek: there are no great landlords in France, owning an entire neighbourhood. Most landholders possess one or two houses; to own a street is unusual in Paris, which should strike us as astonishing when we remember how in London a single landlord often owns the freehold of an entire postal district. Thus competition is keen and rents are cut as low as possible, so that a large margin remains for food and other necessaries. French workmen are not rack-rented as they are in Great Britain; they are not packed in droves in some infamous slum, where they may toil or die for the benefit of a wealthy absentee. Thus a certain degree of prosperity is ensured and a civilising influence brought to bear on the worker; whoever chooses to converse with the French workman will soon realise that he is almost invariably an educated man; this is in great part due to intelligent teaching and to the existence of universal suffrage.

I need not dilate on the Housing question; books and pamphlets dealing with it fully are very numerous, so that we may take it for granted that good housing naturally tends to the raising of the working class. The French workman is not only comfortably housed (in this sense that he can nearly always afford at least two rooms for himself and his family), but he benefits by the fact that his wife is usually a competent housekeeper; the appalling and notorious ignorance of working girls as regards these matters is becoming more and more serious in Great Britain, in consequence of the extension of female labour to all branches of trade. The French housewife is naturally careful and economical; indeed, in a family she often has the better share of brains and controls the household with unquestioned ability; she possesses the art of cooking, which is not so natural as it is thought in this country, but is carefully handed down from mother to daughter. Thus there is no waste; meals are well prepared and the home is clean and neat. The French working man, well housed and well fed, is not tempted to fly to the public-house; in Great Britain, where he often suffers untold miseries in his home, its costly hospitality is his only resource and the natural result is chronic poverty. Lastly, the French race is said not to be very prolific, though personal observation induces one to think that the birthrate is kept down only by the level-headedness of the people, and thus working-class households are not afflicted, as they are in Great Britain, with an endless succession of children, whose fate it is to be ill-housed, ill-fed and ill-educated.

As a result of these three factors, good housing, good housewifery and small families, the French workman

finds himself in a far better position than does the artisan in this country. He is able and willing to save part of his wages, so that he can face with more equanimity the prospect of unemployment, sickness or old age. It is not the exception, but the rule, for the French workman to have a savings bank account and many, in course of time, amass enough to secure for themselves an independence during their declining years. The French workman, being naturally inclined towards economy, has not to so great an extent as the British artisan felt it necessary to secure the support of a friendly society; an individualist by nature, he prefers to manage his own money matters and to invest his savings himself instead of paying them into the coffers of benefit societies. To this, in great part, we can trace the financial power of France. The interesting fact is that Trade Unionism has never, in France, held the same position as in Great Britain; it has always been a political fighting machine for the righting of the workers' wrongs and liable to be directed against the social system. It is for this reason that, though Trade Unions are not necessarily Socialistic and may be inimical to Socialism, yet, in France at any rate, those Unions which were formed with the same ideals as those in Great Britain have by a kind of natural evolution resolved themselves into Socialistic groups.

Human organisations require exercise as much as does the human body; a league or society which remains inactive and does not from time to time justify its existence very soon decays and dies. Such supine bodies even as the livery companies have recognised the fact and, in consequence, devote the energies left them by feasting to the conducting of schools and to

other charitable work; French Trade Unions, finding that there was no great demand for pecuniary benefits and that subscriptions would not be drawn into their coffers by the proffering of mutual assistance, had to seek an outlet for the activity of their leaders, who are usually of the firebrand type. In France the worker would be contented enough, as he is so fully conscious of his well-being that emigration is a negligible quantity, if it were not for his consuming hatred for the *bourgeois* class. He is ignorant of the difficulties that, partly by their own fault, beset the path of the middle classes, of their never-ceasing efforts to maintain a state that they cannot afford and extends an impartial hatred to all who wear a black coat. This is easily understood, as appearances are certainly against the detested class, but whether this hatred be reasonable or not is immaterial; the interesting point is that the *bourgeois* are an object of extreme dislike and that the prospect of subverting social conditions looms very favourably in the vision of French workmen, as is shown by the enormous Socialist poll.

The leaders of French Trade Unions realise this very clearly and find it essential to make their organisations fighting machines; their funds are devoted mainly to the support of Socialist candidatures to local and parliamentary dignities, to the running of Socialist newspapers and more especially to the fomenting of strikes. Strikes are the principal outlet for the activities of those politicians who control Trade Unions; they become ever more frequent and acute as the Unions grow in numbers and in power. The strike is looked upon, not only as a means of forcing capital to disgorge its gains, as is invariably the case in Great

Britain, but as a demonstration directed against an unpopular government. There are many cases in which cessation of labour is brought about by a regular campaign conducted by professional agitators; where no wrongs exist, the feeling ever latent among the workers that they are being defrauded of their due is flattered and exasperated until they are ready to come out. The Trade Union funds are then used to provide strike pay and to subsidise Paris newspapers in order to enlist public sympathy and exert pressure on the Government through friendly parliamentarians.

When a strike takes place in Great Britain, it almost invariably proceeds from some cause of dissatisfaction, such as insanitary conditions, arbitrary action of the masters or general bad times; it is rather unusual (except among miners) for a strike to be provoked by the knowledge that profits are so large that masters can be coerced into granting better wages or shorter hours. In England, when times are good, employment is fairly general and the workers are not inclined to jeopardise their individual position, but such is not the case in France. I do not for a moment say that French strikes are never justified by existing conditions, as some of the most important were rightly directed against dangerous trades and had as an object the prevention of such terrible diseases as necrosis or saturnia; French strikes, however, are usually, and especially at the present time, engineered by agitators, as is demonstrated by the fact that they often fail owing to the lax response of the workers, many of whom are quite willing to become blacklegs.

Trade Unions can, therefore, be looked upon as engines of Socialistic propaganda; most French Trade

Unionists vote for Socialist candidates, the "Liberal-Labour" members who are a noteworthy feature in the British Parliament being practically inexistent in France. Though all Socialists are not Trade Unionists, most Trade Unionists are Socialists; this is normal enough when we remember that all parties are relative, and that the "advanced Liberal" of the thirties may be the reactionary of the forties. Though it is often claimed that British Trade Unionists number as many Conservatives as they do Radicals, it can hardly be maintained that the Labour candidate does not poll the greater part of their votes, simply because he is more advanced. What the Radical is to the Tory in Great Britain, the Socialist is to the Republican in France; thus a similar phenomenon to the above is noticeable in France, where the Trade Unionist naturally votes for the more extreme candidate who is, in that country, a member of the Socialist party.

The influence of the party "boss" is perhaps less strong than it is in Great Britain, where the Labour candidate put up by a Trade Union can count upon the vote of practically every one of its members; French workers are neither so powerfully organised, nor so docile as the British; canvassing and electioneering are in their infancy, in great part owing to the keen interest that the people take in politics. This interest is mainly due to the introduction of universal suffrage, as a result of which every man has a stake in the contest. In certain parts of the country, particularly in mining districts, Trade Unionists are wont to follow the lead of their group-president but, as a rule, they vote as they choose, and Socialist seats would often be imperilled but for the second ballot.

Though the Trade Union vote is not in itself overwhelming, as will be shown further on when dealing with "Yellow" Syndicates, it is important when we look upon it as part of the Socialist vote. It is not assuming too much to say that Trade Unionists vote Socialist to the extent of ninety per cent, and the value of this contingent will be gauged from the following figures. According to the *Bulletin de l'Office du Travail*, an official publication of the Ministry of Labour, on the 1st of January 1906, the membership of French Trade Unions was 836,134; at the normal rate of increase it should now be 900,000 (including about 73,000 women), comprising about 5000 Unions. Seventy per cent of these Unions have combined for political purposes and aggregate over three-quarters of a million members, who represent the effective fighting force. The figures of agricultural syndicates are also available but, as they consist mainly of farmers and number few labourers, their total of 700,000 cannot be taken into consideration as regards the Socialist vote. The number, 900,000, must be taken as a basis when we wish to appraise the value of the Trade Union vote; it is not very large compared with the 2,000,000 British Trade Unionists, nor can assets be compared with those of unions in this country. French individualism and French prosperity have stood in the way of their extension, and their growth is, if anything, rather slow.

Trade Unions are, of course, flourishing mainly in large towns; Paris and its neighbourhood account for nearly 300,000 members, or a third of the total, the mining country in the north coming next with 115,000: the iron trades of the St. Etienne district aggregate 56,000; the south of France is also under Trade

Union influence, though their large membership is rather a demonstration of hostility to the existing state of things than an indication that constructive work is contemplated. The foregoing figures are important, for they show that Trade Unionists are practically merged in the Socialist ranks ; those districts where the Unions are powerful returned Socialists to the Chamber of Deputies at the last election and contributed largely to the triumph of that party. As the poll in 1906 was the heaviest on record, it is fair to assume (from what we know of the French workman's keenness) that the Trade Union membership is roughly comparable with the total poll ; of the advanced groups, out of a total of 2,300,000 votes cast for extreme candidates, the Trade Union vote was probably not less than 800,000, so that it can claim about a third of the Socialist seats. This is, of course, a smaller proportion than in Great Britain if we consider the total of Labour, Trade Union and Liberal-Labour votes.

The influence of French Unions is due mainly to the creation of Labour Exchanges in all the principal towns ; they number in France about 150 and have a membership of 450,000 or half the total Trade Unionists. The Exchange does not serve only as a Labour Bureau, but is the Socialistic centre of the town, where meetings can be held, labour questions discussed and policy resolved upon. In these 150 French towns the extreme spirit is therefore fostered by the associating of members and the encouraging of their solidarity ; the existence of Labour Exchanges is legalised and their gradual expansion over the whole of the country is only a matter of time, during which the movement may grow at an increased rate.

The original aims of Trade Unionism are, however, not entirely forgotten; a revival has been attempted under the leadership of M. Biétry, whose party seeks to restore to Trade Unionism its old standing of workmen's defence league. These are the "Yellow" Unions mentioned above, and their object is to confine themselves to those operations which are within their province as Unions and, avowedly, to oppose the spread of Socialistic doctrines. These Unions put forward the theory that Capital and Labour are not antagonistic and that their fortunes are indissolubly bound up with one another. The "Yellow" Unions, it may at once be said, have no *raison d'être* if such be their theories; they might as well leave the task of social reform to the Republicans and the Radicals, to whose programme they apparently adhere. This is, however, incorrect, as these Unions are founded not only for the purpose of benefiting the workers but have set themselves the far more difficult task of combating the Socialist tendencies of the day; Republicans and Radicals aim at the same goal, but the fact that they belong to the *bourgeois* party militates against them, and the "Yellow" Unions consider themselves in a far better position to secure the adhesion of the workers.

Thus, the "Yellows" can be looked upon as a working-class branch of the Radical party, with which they are usually ready to co-operate; they seek to reform conditions of labour, to secure good wages and short hours, old age pensions, workmen's compensation, protection against industrial diseases, etc., all the measures that the Socialists put forward, but they do not aim at altering the social system. Thus the "Yellows" are opposed to State or municipal trading, to monopolies,

to land nationalisation, etc. An accurate idea of their action will be gathered from the following official programme published at Bourg in 1907.

The objects of the "Fédération des 'Jaunes' de France" are:—

1. To obtain those improvements which may be necessary for the physical, intellectual and moral development of the working class.

2. To give labour access to capital and property.

3. To oppose all strikes not provoked by the uncompromising attitude of masters or not professional in tendency.

4. To fix the hours of labour by agreement between masters and men.

5. To oppose municipal and State collectivism which places the worker under an impersonal, irresponsible and harsh master.

6. To develop among the workers such powerful means of prosperity and independence as co-operative associations and self-secured old age pensions.

7. To encourage private initiative when benevolently inclined.

8. To educate all workers both generally and professionally so as to make them fit for all the needs, rights and liberties of a great people.

9. To defend the rights of property, of combination, freedom of teaching and belief.

10. To enable syndicated bodies to own property.

Such is the "Yellow" programme and, like all programmes, it is a fascinating document. In practice we may reduce it to the doctrine propounded by British Liberal-Labour members, viz. the protection of Labour without declaration of war against Capital. The

"Yellow" party is controlled by a committee of singularly varied composition, under the leadership of M. Pierre Biétry, a watchmaker; out of thirty members thirteen are workmen and five masters; the remaining twelve seats include such distinguished men as Admiral de la Jaille (Senator), General Jeannerod, M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, the well-known economist, Count de Vogüé, etc.

The movement has not, as yet, developed very far; complete figures are not published, as the organisation is not anxious to parade its weakness. The "Yellows" have still to win their spurs, and they will not find the task very easy, as their party does not make the direct appeal to the Collectivist or to the individualist that the Republican and the Socialist parties can make to the electorate. Middle courses are never very popular among the people, who invariably prefer clear issues; it is therefore not astonishing that in 1906 the "Yellow" candidates aggregated only 10,990 votes out of a poll of over eight millions. It must be remembered that they put forward only two candidates, so that this figure cannot be looked upon as conclusive; its value lies in the fact that the movement is still in its infancy and that only one Deputy, M. Biétry, defends its interests in Parliament. As regards total membership, M. Biétry claims 20,000 adherents in Lorraine alone, but it is unlikely that their total can exceed 40,000 members. As far as can be seen the party cannot hope to increase very much, unless it loses its characteristics. At the present time masters look upon it with benevolence and are willing to assist it financially, but they control it absolutely and have only entered into relations with it for the purpose of controlling it. Thus all may be well

as long as the workers do not attempt to escape the masters' authority, but as long as this state of things exists "Yellow" Unions will not gain much ascendancy over Trade Unionists in general. Should the masses at any time endeavour to take their own line, one of two results must follow: either the masters will cut off supplies and the Unions will die out, or the workers will carry on the Unions themselves but will become hostile to masters and undistinguishable from Unions of the ordinary type.

It is unlikely that they will steer a middle course, for "Yellow" members are not encouraged to manage their own affairs as the masters deem themselves the fitter administrators; when the inevitable parting of the ways comes, the "Yellow" Unions will probably evolve and join the Socialist group, just as British Unions slowly abandon their old aims and gravitate towards the Labour Party. The movement is interesting but it need not be taken seriously; like all middle parties it must slowly be ground between the upper and nether millstones of extremism and disappear by degrees.

To conclude this short survey of Trade Unionism in France, it need only be emphasised again that the movement is purely Socialistic and that its direction is not likely to change. Men naturally grow more extreme in views, either because they go further than the parent stock or because they react violently against its tenets; a disgusted Tory makes the best Radical and vice versa, and such must be the case with French Trade Unions. In course of time the split must come, when those members whose bent is not communistic will adhere to the Republican party, whilst the others will join purely Socialistic organisations. Then the great

struggle between the individual and the community will be fought to a finish, and such tame weapons as Acts of Parliament will have to give way before the sterner arbitrament of the sword.

I do not wish to make prophecies that no man now living is likely to verify, but before dismissing the question of Socialism and of systems leading up to it, it is necessary shortly to consider a kindred subject, viz. Co-operation. This is a mild form of Socialism, an application to individual enterprise of the gigantic municipalism towards which modern Socialism tends. The co-operator is not necessarily a Socialist; indeed, he may know nothing of Socialism and yet be a valuable member of his society. But, as we have said before, there are many unwitting Socialists; those who patronise municipal tramways, post a letter in government post offices, or buy tobacco from the French State are unconscious of the fact that they are supporting Socialism, so it is not extraordinary that the more insidious form of Co-operation does not attract their attention. The movement tends towards the creation of a state within the State, capable of controlling it by capturing its supplies and of eventually modifying its political form. Setting aside, however, the possibilities of Co-operation, it is easy to reconcile it with Socialism, because its tendency is to destroy private enterprise and to replace it by quasi-public action; if Co-operation captures industry as it is slowly capturing trade, capital will as assuredly pass into the hands of the community as it would if all wealth-producing businesses were nationalised. We may here recall the fact that Co-operative Societies have as an object the destruction of all middlemen; they contribute their own capital,

sell exclusively to their members and, after paying a limited rate of interest on their capital, return the surplus, in cash or shares, to those with whom they have dealt *pro rata* to their expenditure. Thus profit-earning becomes a secondary consideration; goods are sold at as low a rate as possible, and the profits which, in the ordinary course, would go to merchants, fall into the hands of the consumer. The most advanced system of Socialism goes but little further and, indeed, aims at the very same object, viz. the securing of all profits for the worker. Co-operation and Socialism differ as regards even the limited interest on capital and the division of profits, but both ideas spring from the same source or at least travel on parallel roads.

This digression should explain why Co-operation has been included with Trade Unionism in a chapter which proposes to deal with "semi-Socialism" in France. Like Trade Unionism, Co-operation has not developed very much in that country and for the self-same reasons; again the natural difficulty of grouping Frenchmen for a common object comes to the fore. All the reasons and explanations given in the early part of this chapter apply in this instance, including the effects of national well-being. The Frenchman is too good a revolutionary to make a good co-operator; the system gives no scope for heroics, and the suggestion of solidarity strikes a Frenchman as effacement; moreover, the enterprising Frenchman usually prefers to start a small shop when he wishes to emerge from the working class. He is not content to remain a member of it and to try to improve his condition; he wishes to rise in the world, and refuses to the Co-operative Society the brain power that is essential to its running.

Moreover, though Co-operation can fight its own battles and has won many victories in all parts of Europe, when the people are indifferent it stands in need of support from the men of the day. In Great Britain it has succeeded without their help through the response of the masses, but in France, where the masses were not stirred, strong leadership was essential; in the early days, some ten years ago, political men of all parties were inclined to favour Co-operative Societies and were willing to sit on their councils and to address meetings on their behalf. The shop-keeping class, however, very soon realised the danger with which the movement was fraught for them and made Deputies clearly understand that they must choose between the co-operative movement and their support. Placed in an untenable position, for the working class continued to stand aloof, most of the leaders abandoned the movement which has struggled on unassisted. For all these reasons Co-operation has not developed in France; it had a brief moment of renown and since then has grown slowly, but it holds forth no promise of equalling in importance the British movement. The figures that are quoted further on, considered in themselves, are well worthy of our attention, for nothing tells us that the popular attitude will not alter, but if we compare them with those recorded for Great Britain, they shrink into insignificance. Whereas in this country we are witnessing the effects of Co-operation and of Trade Unionism, which amount practically to an economic revolution, in France the same result can only be attained by political means.

At the present time, commercial Co-operation is represented in France by the *Union Co-opérative*, the pro-

gress of which has been fairly rapid; in 1890 its membership consisted of 59 societies, the number of which rose to 190 in 1895 and to 307 in 1900; at the present time about 350 societies have joined the Union and represent a membership of about 500,000 persons. This looks like an imposing figure, but it should not be forgotten that Mr. Gray, the President of the last Co-operative Congress in Great Britain, estimated the numbers affected in this country at 9,000,000 out of a total population that does not greatly exceed that of France. The *Union Co-opérative* controls a wholesale society serving as a link between manufacturers and Co-operative Societies; its turnover has not yet reached £40,000 per annum, an insignificant amount when compared with £29,650,000, the annual volume of trade carried on by the English and Scotch wholesale societies. However, as the French wholesale society was founded only in 1900 and has been steadily increasing in importance, it is likely that the future will see some considerable expansion in this direction; at the present time France stands low on the list which is headed by Great Britain. The following table is interesting, as it shows the turnover of wholesale societies in various countries; the date between parentheses is that of their formation.

England and Scotland (1864 and 1868) .	£29,650,000
Germany (1894)	£2,000,000
Denmark (1884)	£1,400,000
Switzerland (1892)	£360,000
Hungary (1888)	£320,000
Holland (1889)	£120,000
Belgium (1900)	£80,000
France (1900)	£40,000

It must be understood that the above figures refer in each case to the wholesale society founded by the national federation; where two or more independent Co-operative Societies have united for purchasing purposes their turnover is not included; in France, over and above the official wholesale society, there are about twenty smaller ones, but the total value of their trade (including the official society) does not even then exceed £400,000 per annum.

Productive or manufacturing Co-operation has been attempted in France on a fairly large scale, the most notable instance being the Carmaux glassworkers and the Guise coppersmiths; neither group has been particularly successful. The difficulties with which commercial Co-operation has to contend are as nothing compared with those that confront industrial action, where a market is not available for the product and where capital is always insufficient. At the present time the turnover of these societies, which have been federated since 1884, does not exceed £2,000,000 per annum, a small total when compared with the £9,000,000 aggregated by manufacturing societies in Great Britain.

Co-operation in building should also be mentioned. It is an important movement in Great Britain; in France, however, at the present time, there are not one hundred societies founded for this purpose and they do not house much more than eight thousand persons, as opposed to over three times as many societies in Great Britain accommodating 175,000 tenants.

The preceding figures may be summed up roughly as follows. It is difficult to arrive at exact totals, for even the official publications of the Union acknowledge that half the societies do not supply returns; thus the

Union is compelled to make estimates and it becomes necessary to discount the slightly sanguine results it arrives at. At the present time there are in France over 2000 Co-operative Societies, 1000 of which are grocery stores, mostly very small, for the total membership does not exceed 500,000 families or 2,000,000[1] persons. Their total business does not exceed £10,000,000, as compared with £66,500,000 for trading societies alone in Great Britain; it grows by about 5½ per cent per annum. Strenuous efforts are being made by the *Union Co-opérative* and the *Ligue Nationale* to educate the people and to demonstrate to them the advantages of the system; though I have thought it necessary to give the foregoing details, experience of the French character induces me to think that they will not succeed in interesting the French public. Comfort and individualism are sturdy foes of Co-operation; whilst British and Dutch poverty, German and Swiss sociability have succeeded, French prosperity and French independence must always stand in the way of co-operative development and confine its action to local and insignificant ventures.

Thus, both as regards Trade Unionism and Co-operation, we arrive at the same conclusion: apart from political influence their hold on the French people is not very strong; their development is limited and their action will be truly felt only in the measures promoted by the Socialist party. In Great Britain Trade Unionism and Co-operation are favouring the spread of Socialism; in France they follow it respectfully and will at best assist its triumphal progress. Their fate is absorption, as is ever the case with half-measures; in a

[1] As opposed to nine to ten millions in Great Britain.

word their position with regard to dominant Socialism is that attributed to Portugal after the Methuen treaty —a pinnace attached to the stern of the powerful British frigate; for them there is no emancipation and no hope, except the success of the system of which they are an embodiment.

CHAPTER X

TRADE AND COLONIES

COMMERCIAL and colonial questions need not be developed at length in a work dealing mainly with the political and social aspects of the French State, but certain salient facts must be brought forward and their origin sought for in national conditions. Any geographical treatise will give more valuable details than can be compressed into this short chapter, but it is not so much my object to be statistically informative as to show the state of things in relation with the factors that have brought it about. Thus an exhaustive analysis of French trade, of the wares that it deals with and of the markets that it reaches cannot be attempted, nor is this necessary as the *Direction Générale des Douanes* issues very clear annual statements. The perusal of these statistics is, however, likely to impress the reader erroneously, not because they are inaccurate, but because the obvious comparison with Great Britain and other countries would tend to place France on an undeservedly low footing. It is true that the total import and export trade of France falls short of the totals aggregated by Great Britain, Germany and the United States of America, but this figure is not an absolute criterion of prosperity, even when corrected by the addition of the estimated internal trade; as it

is only a partial statement of facts it is, therefore, entirely misleading. The nature of French trade is essentially different from that of the three nations mentioned above; agricultural races, unless they produce far more foodstuffs than they can consume, do not as a rule figure very largely in the balance sheet of the world. If we say that they are "agricultural" it should be understood that countries such as the United States of America would have to be put down as non-industrial; if a very large proportion of the population, say half or more, is employed on the land, the State can be dubbed "agricultural." This is hardly the case in the United States or Germany, and it is certainly not so in Great Britain. On the other hand, such countries as France, Russia or Hungary are emphatically agricultural, and it is noticeable that they do not figure in the trade returns of the world to an extent commensurate with their population or their area.

Taking France as a type, as about half her population earns a living from the soil, we find this law of choice between the land on the one hand and industry and commerce on the other very clearly illustrated. When the soil is rich and the land laws intelligent, the population naturally turns towards agriculture as a means of existence and not towards the painful toil of industry; as great commercial success, apart from the possession of quasi-monopolies such as Spanish mercury or Russian malachite, only proceeds from intense competition, when as much as half the population is employed on the land, the other half finds no great difficulty in existing and does not strive to increase the turnover. It is only countries the soil of which is poor or which are overpopulated, such as Belgium, Great Britain, Holland,

Germany, Switzerland, etc., that contribute imposing totals to the trade of the world. As France is both rich in land and not over-populated, her people have clung to agriculture and, though a small rural exodus is taking place, it is still her staple industry.

This being the case, the commerce of France is confronted with an enormous section of the population whose needs are practically confined to national products; the home market is secured for the home manufacturer (at what cost to the consumer will be shown further on), and he finds his activities fully employed in satisfying its requirements. Thus we must note that, to the volume of oversea trade, an enormous home trade must be added; it is impossible to estimate it, but its magnitude will be realised when we find labour no better paid than in Great Britain and yet manufactured articles saleable at anything up to double British prices. The commerce of France is rather internal than external, the country being spared the predicament of Stevenson's islanders by its agricultural production. In 1906[1] raw materials to the value of over £133,000,000 were imported; to this figure we must add an enormous and unknown quantity for national raw material and a still larger figure for labour and working expenses; we arrive thus at a total value of many hundreds of millions, which is the value of French manufactured goods. Yet, we find that in 1906 these goods were only exported to the extent of just over £100,000,000, the considerable difference representing the amount sold to the French people (stocks being taken as permanent); the wildest estimates of this amount are made every day, and can never be checked, yet it is not likely

[1] At the time of writing this figure is not available for 1907.

that the total inland and oversea trade of France per head can compare very favourably with that of any other nation.

Bulk figures of trade are not precise indications, even when corrected by the addition of inland trade; that is agreed, but yet they are interesting, particularly when compared with previous years. As a general rule, though increased trade may not spell increased prosperity, large and growing trade figures are healthy indications; a big turnover does not mean big profits, but it means at least that more has been spent in production, which certainly makes for the prosperity of the people. In 1906 the total oversea trade of France was £435,000,000, a small figure when compared with the famous British "thousand millions" record, but, as aforesaid, it is likely that the balance is partly redressed by home trade. Given that the French agricultural population is about forty-eight per cent, as against ten per cent in England and Wales, it will be realised how great is the scope for this part of trade.

Before considering the important questions relating to fluctuations in French trade during the last ten years, a few words as to markets and goods dealt with will give a correct idea of its nature. As regards imports, in 1906, well over sixty per cent were made up by raw materials, a very encouraging indication, for this figure did not include foodstuffs, so that French industry must necessarily have been in a healthy condition or it never could have absorbed raw material to the extent of £133,000,000; the remainder was made up by manufactured goods and foodstuffs. It should be noted that the former did not aggregate more than £37,500,000, or less than eighteen per cent of the total imports; the

tariff wall is most effective and keeps out practically all foreign goods that can be manufactured in France, this of course at a price paid by the consumer. Exports are made up nearly exactly to the extent of fifty per cent by manufactured goods, a figure which compares very well with the eighteen per cent imported. I do not propose to revive the theory of the Balance of Trade, though it has been exhumed many times since May 1903, but it is quite clear that, when all allowances for freight and customs have been made, imports of eighteen per cent compare very well with exports of fifty per cent, for the total exports practically equal the total imports, while manufactured goods exported considerably exceed manufactured goods imported. It must of course be understood that this is only a rough indication; a "favourable" Balance of Trade is only "favourable" if there is a balance of profits, not only of turnover, a fact often lost sight of by the Protectionist party.

At the present time, French trade is flourishing and has practically recovered from the serious blow that was dealt it in 1892, as will be shown further on. Industry has successfully overcome national poverty in iron and coal, and its prosperity is testified to, not so much by the fact that manufactured goods figure in exports to the extent of fifty per cent, as by the annual increase of this percentage. Taking the total figure of exports and imports in 1906 at £435,000,000, we find that Great Britain easily heads the list of customers both for imports and exports; that is a normal result, the two countries being neighbours, but it is also explained by the poor agricultural development of Great Britain; the total trade of the two countries amounts

to some £80,000,000 or close on twenty per cent of the total French trade. This has been the case practically since Waterloo, though the period of very close relations was only begun under Napoleon III; we must remember that, in the fifties, neither Germany nor Italy was in existence and that Great Britain benefited from this state of things almost as much as from her position as a neighbour. Be that as it may, twenty per cent of the oversea trade of France is accounted for by Great Britain, and it is somewhat surprising that this should not have resulted long ago in a good understanding such as is now enjoyed by the two countries. Immediately next to Great Britain, and in virtue of their neighbourhood, rank Germany, with £46,000,000, and Belgium, with £44,000,000, the next most important business connection being the United States with £36,000,000. As regards colonial trade, the *Direction Générale des Douanes* unconsciously testifies to its insignificance; it gives the figures of exports and imports to and from Algeria, the total of which is £24,000,000, but as regards other colonies, it does not consider their totals of sufficient importance to be mentioned and merges them into "sundries," after having given such a small figure as a little over £4,000,000 for Austria-Hungary. This question will be dealt with in the second part of this chapter, but the fact is sufficiently noteworthy to bear repetition.

These preliminary matters being disposed of, it is essential that we should obtain an idea of the fluctuations of French trade, say for the last ten years, as nothing is more delusive than the returns for a single year; moreover, as Great Britain is still in the throes of a fiscal controversy, valuable lessons may be deduced

from the French experiment conducted by M. Méline in 1892. The following table, the figures of which are extracted from the *Documents Statistiques sur le Commerce de la France*, were published by the French Customs House in 1906. Gold and silver bullion are excluded by these statistics and, as these metals do not affect the discussion, because their movements are solely connected with minting and not with exchange, they are not included in the table. The amounts are rounded off to millions sterling.

Year.	Imports. £	Exports. £	Totals. £
1897	158,000,000	144,000,000	302,000,000
1898	179,000,000	140,000,000	319,000,000
1899	181,000,000	166,000,000	347,000,000
1900	188,000,000	164,000,000	352,000,000
1901	175,000,000	160,000,000	335,000,000
1902	176,000,000	170,000,000	346,000,000
1903	192,000,000	170,000,000	362,000,000
1904	180,000,000	178,000,000	358,000,000
1905	191,000,000	195,000,000	386,000,000
1906	225,000,000	210,000,000	435,000,000
1907 (estd.)	242,000,000	222,000,000	464,000,000

The first point that attracts our attention is that, during the last ten years, imports have in every case but one exceeded exports, though this difference was very large in 1898 only, a year of commercial warfare which we shall meet again. It may be necessary to repeat that any comparison between export and import figures is necessarily sterile, not only because imported goods are rated at the frontier and are eventually sold at a price enhanced not only by railway freights but by interests, charges and profits, but because exported

goods are not usually declared at the price they will fetch in the country of destination, for it is often unascertainable. A cask of wine shipped at Bordeaux for Germany will be entered at, say, 300 francs, its value, on the French register; the shipper would not add the freight, charges and insurance or he would be compelled by the German customs to pay on the total value. But once the cask has entered Germany, if it has to be forwarded by rail, by the time it has reached its destination and all the middlemen have added their profits to that of the original seller, the price of the cask may have reached 400 francs, which will still remain entered on the French books at 300. So much for the value of the export figures on which Protectionists lay so much stress!

Increasing imports and increasing exports are the true criterion, especially when the former are mainly made up of raw materials and the latter of manufactured articles. The fluctuations of population, too often neglected in the British controversy, need not be taken into consideration in the French State, blessed as it is with a practically unvarying population. As has already been mentioned, at the present time these gratifying signs are shown in the import and export figures of France, so that we are enabled to consider the total trade as a true indication of the commercial state of things, because its components are of a satisfactory nature.

A comparison of the totals from 1897 to 1906 shows a distinct improvement; the first and last figures of the decade show an increase in total trade of over thirty-three per cent, without any great fluctuations and signalised principally by the considerable increase in

1905 and 1906.[1] But, great as this figure of £435,000,000 may be, it is hardly a record; true, it is the largest total ever noted for French trade, but if we consider that the commerce of the Republic attained practically equal totals before 1892, we realise at once that a terrible crisis has had its place in the history of the last twenty years of French trade. The Republic has recovered its position; commerce is flourishing, but a great and costly experiment in Protectionism has been made and has ended in the most dismal of failures; French trade was half ruined by the experiment and only extricated when the system was practically abandoned, after it had been the cause of considerable losses. It is with this interesting attempt that we must endeavour to deal, with a view to gaining information applicable to this country.

Up to 1892 France was practically a Free Trade nation, in this sense that the general tariff was tempered in the case of most important countries by commercial treaties; the policy, initiated by the Government of Napoleon III, of friendship with Great Britain was established by a treaty for twenty years, extending up to 1882. Germany, having secured the "most favoured nation" clause by the treaty of Frankfort, which marked the close of the great war, did not come into consideration, but friendly treaties had been concluded with Spain, Switzerland and Italy. Thus France had Free Trade with all her neighbours, in the sense that Great Britain enjoys Free Trade to-day, viz. customs for revenue purposes only.

The "Fair Trade" movement had, however, already begun to make itself felt at the end of the Second

[1] Results for 1907 being only estimated are not used in these comparisons, but they confirm all deductions based on 1906.

Empire and industries, even agriculture, had raised a claim for the preservation of the home market; their cry had been unheeded and the treaties had been concluded but, soon after the war, the triumph of the middle classes brought the question to the fore and a fierce controversy was centred towards 1875 round the renewal of the treaty with Great Britain. Public opinion had, however, not forgotten the friendly attitude of this country at the time of the Franco-German War, nor did it at all vigorously support the proposals of the industrial classes. Politicians were too busy considering the reform of the Senate (which came to a head in 1884) to give much attention to the matter, but they were sufficiently impressed by the clamour of the manufacturers to give them at least a sop; it was decided that the twenty years' commercial treaty with Great Britain should be renewed, but this time for ten years only from 1882. Thus the thin end of the wedge was inserted and the manufacturers continued their efforts with remarkable vigour. The usual methods of propaganda were employed and funds were not lacking for the prosecution of Protectionist aims, supported as they were by the wealthy interested. In 1892, the Protectionist campaign was crowned with success; it was not made an issue at the elections, for these, in France, are centred rather round men than round measures, but the Legislature, finding the bulk of the people indifferent and a powerful minority clamorous, decided not to renew the treaty.

Thus in 1892 and 1893, foreign goods and raw materials that had been admitted at reduced rates for as long as thirty years in the case of Great Britain suddenly fell under the sway of an aggravated general

tariff which taxed certain articles as much as twenty-five and thirty per cent, the average being fifteen. This was far from being comparable with a MacKinley or even a Dingley Bill, but it was enough to exclude foreign produce on which the margin of profit was small. At last the manufacturers had their home market and they proceeded to exploit it to their hearts' content, a general rise in prices being noticeable, while strikes, a natural result of this rise, further impeded industry. The manufacturing interest would, however, have been a gainer at the expense of the public, if they had not been accustomed to reckon also on foreign trade; enhanced prices would have repaid them for smaller turnovers and, sheltered by the tariffs, the trusts that they proceeded to form would have proved valuable assets.

But France was a great exporting country before the 1892 tariff, and industry had to rely on foreign trade for its handsomest profits. This was the weak point in the Protectionist armour and it was speedily found out by the foreigner; Great Britain, adhering to her Free Trade policy, did not stir, but Italy, Switzerland and Spain began against France a violent tariff war. Not only were French goods placed under the ordinary *régime* but, in Italy, they were even differentiated against. In five years France lost nearly a quarter of her oversea trade, her exports being, of course, the first to suffer; thus internal industrial unrest was assisted by bad foreign trade and a powerful current of opinion soon manifested itself. Had France possessed two parties instead of half a dozen one of them would doubtless have gained office with "Free Trade" as a programme. France is an ideal country for this policy, because she is

self-supporting as regards foodstuffs, but such was not the popular demand. Nothing so radical was required of the Government, but the tariff war was to be stopped. In 1897, when returns were at their lowest, negotiations had to be undertaken and within the next three years treaties were signed with Spain, Italy and Switzerland, on terms roughly approximating to those ruling before the tariff war. The general tariff remained applicable to other countries, except Germany, as aforesaid, the position of Great Britain not being affected; in exchange for her concessions, France received practically nothing: the "big revolver" had missed fire.

By degrees the result of this more enlightened policy made itself felt and returns increased slowly and steadily; unfortunately for France, the long tariff war had left its traces. Whilst French goods (particularly wine, silks and Parisian articles) had been barred out, markets had been captured by other countries, notably by Germany, Great Britain and the United States. Feeling was strong against French policy and rivals had no difficulty in establishing themselves on European markets; business relations being once created, when peace was assured France found herself compelled to make up leeway. Popular habits and tastes had changed and, for several years, practically up to 1903, customers were not recaptured. Whether old connections were re-established cannot of course be ascertained; in all likelihood increases were due mainly to new business.

The moral of France's Protectionist experiment can easily be pointed; tariffs produced an immense shrinkage in her trade; their reduction improved it beyond all expectation. The venture was a costly one but, if

it has effectually cured the country of Protectionism, the losses will ultimately be found salutary. At the present time, generally speaking, France is under a *régime* of moderate Protection; none but a doctrinaire would object to tariffs in the abstract, or conclude that we must slavishly adhere to French conclusions, but a few points must be noted with regard to the position at the present time. Customs are in France both protective and revenue-earning; in 1906 they produced almost exactly £20,000,000. Direct taxation is very small in France; there is no income tax and other direct contributions are limited to under 4½ per cent on dividends and an average urban rate of about two shillings in the pound rental. The fabric of French finance rests on indirect taxation, such as customs and the tobacco monopoly, to which may be assimilated local customs (*octrois*), etc. Controversy has raged round the question of direct versus indirect taxation, both of which have their advantages, but France shows no great inclination to adopt the former system, as exemplified by income tax.

It must, however, be mentioned that indirect taxation has considerably raised prices in France. Not only have veiled trusts been constituted, the most important being those concerned with sugar, paper and petroleum, but the general trader has been able to obtain high prices under the shelter of the tariff. Clothes cost in France at least fifty per cent more than in Great Britain, books about double, sugar also about double, coffee double, tea about treble; meat and dairy produce are sold at about thirty per cent above British prices, and it is noticeable with regard to the latter that the French "dump" it into England at a lower price than prevails

at home.[1] Thus the advantage of low direct taxation partly disappears; it is true that the tax is easily paid, but it bears heavily on the poor whose consumption of necessaries is not proportionately much smaller than that of the wealthy. It is in great part for this reason that the Socialist party has pledged itself to increase death dues and to establish an income tax; it is practically certain to succeed ultimately in both these aims, when it will be possible to reduce the cost of living or to foster the development of social schemes.

The reader must have observed that in the foregoing remarks practically no mention has been made of the French colonies with the exception of Algeria. The latter occupies a unique position and can hardly be called a colony, as we understand the word. Strictly speaking, no exotic French settlement can be compared either with British crown colonies, unrepresented as they are in the Legislature, or with the self-governing nations whose connection with the United Kingdom becomes ever more shadowy. Most French colonies are represented in the home Parliament, to which they elect ten deputies and four senators (excluding Algeria); the interests of the smaller settlements are protected by the members of a special council.

Leaving aside Algeria, which is looked upon as part of France, from which it is only separated by a day's journey, we find that the colonies are to all intents and purposes in a similar position, in fact if not in name. Their affairs are managed much on the same lines as are those of a French *département*, highly centralised and

[1] This is worth noting, in view of the suggestion that we should resist "dumping" by tariffs, in fact, that we should become "dumpers," viz. sell cheaply to the foreigner and at high prices to the Englishman.

wholly in the hands of the Paris executive, as represented by the Colonial Office.[1] It would be impossible to manage them otherwise, because their white population is so small (it does not reach a million) and so scattered that self-government would be out of the question even if France were prepared to grant it. Before considering French colonial matters, we must, however, dispose of trade questions and we are at once impressed by the extraordinary insignificance of French colonial commerce; in 1906 the total trade only amounted to £41,000,000, of which Algeria accounted for £24,000,000. A comparison with the figures recorded for the British Empire shows that the colonial trade of the latter is about six times more important and that it is increasing, which is hardly the case with France. The commercial link that has so long united the scattered possessions of the British crown can therefore hardly be said to exist when the total trade with the mother country only amounts to about ten per cent of the latter's total; in default of sentimental ties which cannot easily be formed between white races and coloured, this most effective bond of union being non-existent, the colonies of France can be looked upon as held only by the power of the sword. I do not suggest that they are disaffected; colonies where no form of self-government has ever been introduced rarely show signs of hostility among the native races. It is the example and the teaching of the white that provoke unrest in such countries as India, South Africa or Egypt; the coloured subjects of France are hardly

[1] An attempt is now being made to encourage local government by entrusting the colonies with the management of their finances, but it is too early to decide whether the experiment is likely to be successful.

aware of the meaning of parliamentary government and placidly accept the supremacy of the white.

Thus, both the commercial and the sentimental tie being weak, France has found it necessary to introduce into her colonies the bureaucratic system that prevails at home. Algeria alone has emerged from political barbarism, thanks to the proximity of the mother country and to the comparatively large influx of white men, French, Italian and Spanish. But if we consider the other colonies we arrive at the conclusion that they are as yet a total failure. If we admit that a successful colony is one where numerous settlers decide to seek their fortune and to establish homes, where trade develops and revenue suffices to meet expenditure, we find that the French possessions realise none of these conditions and do not appear likely ever to do so. It has been argued by French colonial students that British colonies are not so successful as is usually made out; they triumphantly point out that Great Britain still defrays practically the bulk of military expenditure and is recompensed by seeing her exports taxed: while admitting that there is much truth in the contention, it is however obvious that Great Britain reaps definite advantages that may or may not be adequate but which immeasurably exceed the benefits conferred upon France by her sway over the next great colonial empire.

Not only is French trade with the colonies very small, but the burden of their administration and defence is enormous; in 1906 the colonial budget showed a deficit of about £3,600,000, to which should be added a large proportion of the army and navy estimates and a deficit of £3,000,000 on Algeria alone, that gem

of French colonies. We shall not be far wrong if we conclude that the profits on £41,000,000 of trade do not compensate the mother country for this deficit of 6½ millions plus defence, which is borne by the French taxpayer. If a careful inquiry were instituted, on purely financial grounds, it might be found that British colonies were a poor speculation, but it needs no further inquiry to show that France would be far better off if shorn of her colonial empire. No trade, no emigration, large and regular deficits, such is the sorry tale told by French colonial records; this is not a question of "turning the corner," for Algeria, whose deficit accounts for nearly one-half the total, has been in the hands of the mother country for over seventy years.

The causes of the French colonial fiasco are to be sought for to a certain extent in the nature of the oversea possessions and particularly in the French character. Though Algeria, Madagascar and Indo-China offer immense possibilities to agriculture and commerce, the larger portion of the French possessions is represented by the sands of the Sahara, which are not likely ever to pay for a fraction of the military expenditure they entail. The West African possessions have frightened away the few settlers that might have been tempted by them, for their climate is murderous and unpleasant; Madagascar shares somewhat the same reputation and other colonies are either earthquake spots, small or strictly preserved for the deportation of convicts. Yet, out of Algeria, Tunisia, Indo-China and Madagascar alone, a great colonial empire could have been built, extending as it does over an area equal to about three times that of France. These colonies are the most interesting, not only as regards money values, but

because they have attracted the larger numbers of French emigrants. If we reduce by half the estimated area of the French possessions by counting as nil the Sahara and the plague spots of West Africa, we arrive at an area equal to nearly ten times that of France, blessed with the most varied climates and often advantageously situated as regards native labour. Had such material been placed in British hands the story would no doubt be a very different one, not only because our countrymen are more successful colonists, but because conditions in Great Britain are as favourable to colonial expansion as they are hostile in France.

The French colonial failure is not so much due to the characteristics of the colonies as to peculiarities of the French temperament, of the *régime* and of national social conditions. It would be unfair to dub the Frenchman unenterprising, for he has won his spurs as an explorer, a soldier and a privateersman; if his colonial empire is undeveloped it is mainly because he has not been crowded out of his own country as has been the fate of the Anglo-Saxon. For many years the population of France has been practically unchanging, as the birthrate and the deathrate are roughly balanced; the small increase is mainly due to the shrinkage in the deathrate, which does not make for a plethora of young citizens anxious for an opening, and to immigration. The young men of France find no difficulty in living in a country where the fluctuations of the population are so nicely adjusted that men naturally step into the shoes vacated by their seniors. If we make every allowance for *wanderlust* we cannot otherwise explain British emigration than by admitting that these islands have long been too small for their

ever-increasing population. To this day there is considerable excess of births over deaths in Great Britain; it is likely that improved land conditions would detain many who go to seek a living, particularly in Canada, but there is a limit to the productivity of the land, past which emigration is automatic.

Existing commercial and industrial openings suffice in France for the offspring of the classes that devote themselves to these occupations, so that a natural check intervenes when emigration occurs to the young man; he naturally hesitates before surrendering his chances at home for shadowy prospects in the colonies and, in most cases, elects to stay. As regards the landed class, the innumerable small French estates pass automatically from father to son; they are often divided, but a limit is set to the splitting up of holdings by the habitual sale of lands to which there is no male heir. The peasantry is of all classes the most sedentary; it rarely emigrates from Great Britain so long as it can earn the barest of livings: in France, where agriculturists are prosperous and independent, where to hire land is less usual than to own it, there is no inducement to forsake the soil.

These remarks resolve themselves in the conclusion that well-being has militated against emigration; as regards the prosperity of the individual this is an excellent thing, for emigration is only a vent and not a desirable result. If we consider the position of the race, it becomes, however, a source of danger; acute competition, which exists in armaments and in commerce, has not spared population: it is permissible to wonder whether France will not eventually find herself in a serious position when confronted by her enormous

neighbours for whom expansion is the breath of life. However, at the present time, France is to be envied rather than pitied, as she has in her colonies a reserve which she may or may not make use of, but which is none the less in being.

Comfort and a low birthrate have also had social effects; small families are the rule and, among the middle classes, the only child is of very frequent occurrence. If it be an only son, he is assured of ultimately inheriting his parents' fortune, which need not be large to satisfy the average Frenchman; he enjoys all the care of his parents, has a monopoly of education and is ensured a start in life. There is no inducement for him to abandon France; moreover, family relations are singularly close, particularly the bond that unites mothers and sons. Thus the entire influence of the mother is nearly invariably arrayed against emigration and the son usually responds. Unless he be bent on emigrating these combined factors necessarily deter him and he chooses France, unless he obtain a civil or military post in the service of the Government.

Against these inducements to stay in France, the attractions of the colonies do not weigh very heavily because they are far from holding out the prospects that are so richly forthcoming in the British Empire. French possessions suffer acutely from centralisation; as has already been put forward, it would be impossible to grant them full self-government, owing to the huge outnumbering of whites by coloured men. Thus we find ourselves in an impasse: the settlers do not increase because the colonies are ill-administered and the colonies must remain ill-administered because settlers do not increase. Bureaucracy is rampant in all French

colonies; a number of unnecessary posts have been created to satisfy private interests and to provide administrative machinery for a far larger population than will ever settle. In small colonies the bulk of the whites is composed of soldiers and officials; in the larger ones the remainder is often mainly foreign. In Algeria, for instance, the French aggregate only 300,000 as against 250,000 foreigners, leaving out of count those who are naturalised. As this figure of 300,000 includes the army and the officials, we find that, even in this gem of colonies, trade is mainly in the hands of the foreigner. But Algeria is prosperous enough and is the favourite goal of French emigrants; if we turn to any other colony, the position is different. There the official and military elements are dominant and arrogant, as they invariably become in countries where the natives are numerous and white men are few. The settler finds himself enmeshed in red tape, flouted by the military and passed over by the officials; he has to contend, not only with the usual colonial difficulties, such as the procuring of capital and native labour, fighting disease, etc., but with the indifference of the authorities and the interminable delay entailed by referring matters of small importance to Paris. An indication of this state of things is to be found in the fact that many a French settler has left Senegal or the Coast of Ivory for the neighbouring British colonies.

The powers are well aware that the colonies are not in a satisfactory condition and have made efforts to remedy the state of things; propaganda has been and is being conducted in the schools, in the universities and in the Press, but it has fallen flat, if we leave out the concession hunter who is often a foreigner. Up to

the institution of the two years' military service, considerable advantages were even granted to young settlers, who were offered an exemption of two years' service out of three, provided that they settled in a French colony for eleven years, beginning at the age of nineteen. However, there was no response and this privilege has been swept away unregretted, with the other exemptions.

Socially, financially, commercially, whether we look upon them as preserves for the youth of the nation or as political heirlooms, the French colonies are a failure. It seems hardly likely that they will, for the greater part, emerge from the slough of despond in which they are plunged. Algeria, a seventy-year-old colony, shows a deficit of £3,000,000; Indo-China, which has been in the hands of France for over twenty years, entails military expenditure to the amount of £1,600,000 per annum; whether the colonies be young or old the same tale of heavy costs, small returns and poor trade must be told. A touch of irony is lent to these remarks when we observe that the most untrammelled of the French possessions, viz. Tunisia, is the only one that pays its way; the protectorate succeeds where the colony fails. This must not be taken as absolute, as Tunisia should of course be responsible for part of the expenditure on defence, but it is much in the same position as those British colonies which enjoy the protection of the mother country at the latter's expense.

I cannot conceive that French colonies may eventually be successful unless two circumstances should modify present conditions. The one is an increase in the population so large that numerous settlers may be forthcoming; the other is that, following on their

emigration, French systems may be altered and a measure of self-government be given the colonies. Neither is likely to happen; the birthrate shows no signs of increasing any more than it does in other old European states. The void may be filled by British and German immigration, but whether these elements will easily be merged into the existing population is a matter for conjecture and for doubt when we remember that they do not always assimilate even in America.

As regards full self-government, it is unlikely to follow even on a considerable increase of population, wedded as are French governments to the highly centralised machine inherited from the first Napoleon; the problem is, however, not likely to crop up, as the first condition does not seem attainable, so that France will be spared the colonial difficulties that brought about the secession of Great Britain's North American possessions.

The foregoing presents a gloomy picture, but it is a subject for congratulation that France has maintained her position without the aid of colonial adjuncts and it reads a lesson that ambitious politicians may study, when they contemplate launching their forces into adventures that must be costly and may not be necessary for the good of the State.

CHAPTER XI

FRANCE AMONG THE NATIONS

TWO centuries ago it would have been easy enough to make a list of nations worthy of being called great powers; a hundred years later, from a modified point of view, a slightly different list would have been prepared; if we now give way to these speculations we have again no difficulty in arriving at a short list of nations with the development of which the world must count. Should we do so, we find without hesitation that the claim of France is well established, not so much in a particular respect as in all respects.

These remarks lead us to an interesting conclusion: France has never grown old, has never suffered from political ups and downs, from external wars and civil turmoil. This is all the more singular because France is an old country, the political frontiers of which were roughly established at the beginning of the seventeenth century; the wars of Louis XIV did not add much to her possessions; those of Napoleon only added that which the army could hold for the time being. The consequences of age should therefore have been felt, for there was every opportunity for decadence. All the factors were present in the shape of war, wealth and iniquity. Yet, for some unknown reason, France has never lost her status, while other races have suffered

from the swing of the pendulum, so much so that it has become a truism to say that no nation can hope for eternal greatness but must decay and die, as do its individual citizens.

Except in the case of Great Britain, whose insular position makes comparison with any other country impossible, the history of Europe during the last five centuries is a picture of the rise and fall of various powers, which have in succession swayed the destinies of the continent. One after the other emerged from obscurity, more or less speedily to return to it. Spain had her great days under Charles V, under Philip II—and what is Spain to-day? Denmark, once the overlord of Norway and of Northern Germany, is now a pigmy kingdom owing its continued existence to European jealousies; Sweden still cherishes the memory of Gustavus Adolphus, of Charles XII and yet lives in daily fear of the Teuton and the Slav. On the other hand we see Italy come into being not half a century ago and struggle towards power, thanks to the megalomaniac energy of Cavour and of Crispi; side by side with the House of Savoy, the House of Hohenzollern carries the German Empire to the pinnacle of European power; the United States drown in blood the internal fires of disruption; Japan witnesses the astounding phenomenon of a progressive theocratic revolution. All through this storm and stress the position of France remains unaltered; like lava-born islands thrust through the waves, kingdoms arise suddenly, kingdoms totter and, crumbling, bring down with them a dynasty or a system. France meanwhile is a little more or a little less powerful as the case may be, but France remains a great power; she has the secret of perpetual youth.

Thus, when we look upon her to-day, we are surprised to see that she has escaped convulsion, and we do not at once perceive the causes of the phenomenon. We may have definite views as to the factors that make for power, but, whatever they be, France does not at first sight appear to be affected by them and yet the fact remains that she is a great power.

Roughly speaking, a great power is a great military power; a large army and an efficient navy do not in themselves place a nation at the head of its rivals, but the possession of these advantages enables it to develop its trade and its industries, to foster learning and the arts, so that it may become great in the true sense of the word. The argument of the gun is final, but if men were rated by their brute strength our roll of honour would be inscribed with the names of Mendoza and other Tutbury Pets, rather than with those of Huxley and Spencer. This remark applies to nations; none will contend that Abyssinia ranks with Italy, though in the late contest Abyssinia won.

From the political point of view the position of France is now secured, since the Republic has been recognised by all civilised races; the Pretenders are still courteously received by their royal relatives, as is fair and proper, but no one dreams of construing the fact into a protest against the present form of government. Thus there are in the way of international intercourse no difficulties such as those that beset Servia; the facts have been accepted, and France has been fully amnestied by her fellow nations. She is now judged and rated on her merits, not on her stormy past; the basis of her present power is alone considered and, if analysed critically, it does not at first sight justify her

European status. France is strong, but she is probably weaker than Germany and Russia, weaker perhaps than Great Britain in the aggregate; commercially speaking her oversea trade is far inferior to that of Germany and Great Britain, as also to that of the United States; her industries are not favoured by the existence on her soil of metals and coal; her colonies are neither thickly populated by settlers nor developing on sound financial lines; her art is dominant, but the arts do not weigh much in a scale loaded with big guns; to crown all these disadvantages, let us mention that her deathrate is practically equal to her birthrate, so that the population does not increase, an excellent result as regards the planet, but fatal as regards the nation.

Yet France emphatically preserves her position as a great power; she has never lost it from the time when her starving heroes won Valmy and Jemappes to that day when the German troops marched through Paris. In her darkest hours France was great, and the last forty years of peace have but increased her greatness. To what is this to be ascribed? As was hinted at the beginning of this chapter, the claims of France are more understandable if taken *in toto* than if they are analysed separately; but in order to arrive at a right view of the case, it is necessary to consider them separately, and then to take a general survey.

In all likelihood much of the present importance of France is due to her traditions; I do not say that the Republic lives on the reputation of its predecessors, but no race entirely shakes off either the prestige or the odium arising out of its past history. The name of Spain still suggests magnificence and the arrogance

of a King on whose dominions the sun never set; "Rome" means an iron republic or an all-embracing empire, ruthless, polished, hardly human. So, too, has the tradition of France been handed down; all the glamour of the Great Revolution and of the Napoleonic period has been added to the graces of the Renaissance, to the magnificence and the conquests of Louis XIV, to the learning of the eighteenth century. All this has coloured foreign opinion and taught it to expect a great deal from the French, and the knowledge that much is expected fosters the doing of great deeds; the consciousness of a great past is a wonderful stimulus for governments whose personal pride cannot allow them to fall below the highest standards. We know that the republics have never hesitated to make their own precedents, but they have always striven, the third no less than the other two, to live up to the great principles of 1789, a nobler code by far than any which influenced the sumptuous days of royal rule.

Be that as it may, even if the Republic had not striven so earnestly for continuity of policy, the glamour would not have disappeared; greatness would have been thrust upon it whether deservedly or not. The fact that France was glorious in the past is enough to justify her in the present, even though other nations have waxed powerful while she was at a standstill.

By tradition also, France has been the land of the arts; in the chapter on Reaction, it is shown how the Republic has preserved this tradition and fostered all that is good for men to know. But leaving aside this particular point, leaving aside even the natural genius of the nation, we must fully recognise how much of her status France owes to this fact. Arts and letters are

subtle means of influence, but it is in their very nature to be potent in their action; the foreigner who lands in France does so with deep respect for her literary and artistic past, if he be cognisant of its existence. We must realise that this nation struggled into its intellectual position when the rest of the world was practically sunk in barbarism; there are older civilisations, it is true, but at the end of the fifteenth century, from which time the French Renaissance can be traced, Italy alone, and there but a few states, had been at all influenced by the awakening. Europe had not thoroughly recovered from the barbarian ravages of the fifth and sixth centuries, nor from the Moorish wars in the seventh and eighth; thus France was the first to regain her strength and anticipated by some fifty years the bursting into flower of the Elizabethan period. The tradition was never forgotten; indeed, the earliest offspring of the Renaissance were outstripped by their intellectual heirs; from François I to the dawn of the twentieth century the movement, chequered as it necessarily was, never ceased. Upon this literary renown is based a great part of the prestige of France; indeed, when it is questioned, the word "tradition" is in itself a sufficient answer.

There is, however, yet another tradition to which we can trace her present greatness; to have been strong is an excellent thing; to have been learned is equally valuable; but France has been more than conquering or wise. Her history shows her to have been a faithful ally; her people are sentimental, given to sometimes misplaced enthusiasm, quick, impulsive and wholly generous. Michelet conjures up for us a magnificent picture of her past:—

"Stack up, all ye nations that be! stack up all generous and sumptuous deeds by which humanity alone could benefit! The pyramid of France would rise gloriously towards the heavens and yours, oh! nations! yours would barely reach the knees of a little child!"

Lost causes have always been French causes; the sword has always been drawn on behalf of the weak; French blood has flowed for the Pole, for the Greek, for struggling Italy, for the insurgent North American colonies. Moreover, once her word was pledged, France never withdrew; in modern history, the abandonment of Maximilian to the Mexicans, who were soon to execute him at Queretaro, is a solitary exception. But, in this case, the heart of the French people was never in the mad scheme, a product of the quixotic brain of a second-rate Napoleon; history can quote no instance where the French people have turned from a friendly compact at the call of their interests. They co-operated loyally with the British in the Crimea; it was thirty years at least before the peoples were estranged, and recent events have shown how shallow the misunderstanding was. Their friendship for Russia has been unimpaired even by the troublous happenings in the Far East; the good offices of the Republic were available, some ten years after the conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance, to smooth serious differences between Russia and Great Britain, in which good work the Government was warmly supported by the country. Neither the defeats in Manchuria, nor the civil turmoil from which Russia is suffering, have detached France from an alliance to which she is pledged: in matters political where the word of the people is, there their heart is also.

On these three great traditions, of past prominence, of learning and of loyalty, is in great part based the dominating position of France. There are, however, other considerations, for no nation can continue to live on even the most glorious of pasts; there are precise advantages to which the country owes its position, advantages both permanent and temporary, and these we must now consider. The most important is doubtless the military power of the Republic, both on land and sea. Let us again emphasise the fact that no nation can be truly great unless it possess the power of the sword; a strong and efficient army inspires a nation with the confidence and magnanimity that well-trained muscles give the citizen. The weak are too often cowardly, crafty and mean: they cannot afford to be otherwise; the strong can indulge in generosity, patience and mercy. The Socratic maxim "Thy temper rises: therefore thou art wrong" applies forcibly in this case; strength tends to the preservation of the peace, because the strong man knows that if necessary he can impose his will upon the weaker; he will not do so ruthlessly, because the latent threat will gain him his ends. It is a happy position, similar to that of the man of independent means, who feels able to defy the world and yet treats it with courtesy.

This enviable situation is to a great extent that of France. Her military resources are doubtless inferior to those of Germany and of Russia, but not so inferior as to create fear in the minds of her statesmen. No nation whose standing army consists of 575,000 men, backed by a reserve of 2,000,000 trained soldiers who have not attained the age of thirty-five, need fear a European war; at the present time, the French army

could muster over 2,500,000[1] men, not one of whom would be less well trained than our reservists and half a million of whom would be equal to the British regular. In the presence of such numbers it matters but little whether or no her eastern neighbours could outnumber her troops by five to three as is their boast; the spoils of war do not fall only to the big battalions: they belong rather to the efficient and to the patriotic. With such forces, France fears no foe on land; indeed, she could well afford to launch out into foreign adventure: the fact that she has not chosen to do so to any extent since the Franco-German War is evidence that strength does not as necessarily breed gluttony as many are inclined to believe.

If we consider the French fleet, we arrive at similar conclusions; much that makes for inefficiency and laxity has of late come to light, but can any system boast of being wholly beyond suspicion? Without attempting to shift the ground of the argument by a threadbare *tu quoque*, the facts may be admitted without weakening the position; the fleet has deteriorated because it has had no work to do. It might be retorted that the army also has had but few chances of proving its mettle and yet has not suffered the same fate. The reason is to be sought in the fact that the French are hardly a seafaring race, whereas they are emphatically military; thus, during the many years of peace, it is the navy that went to seed. The statement gains force when we consider the contrary position of Great Britain; here we find a seafaring race whose navy preserves its efficiency without firing a gun, while its army declines and only saves the situation in an emergency by dint of gigantic efforts.

[1] First reserves only; all told the figure is over 4,000,000.

But the British army is being constantly reorganised and will probably resume its old status; the French navy, still the second most powerful in the world, will a few years hence feel the benefit of latter-day scandals. If we take the army and navy together, therefore, no uneasiness need be felt as to the military position of the country. The Republic can still justify its status by challenging any who doubt it to prove their words.

Military strength, though the foundation of power, is not enough; it is the ace of trumps, but the next court card is wealth. Without money, and especially without gold, war cannot be waged; it may be said that loans can always be issued for war purposes, but on what terms? It is true that Russia had no great difficulty in procuring the sinews of war, though she had to submit to exactions on the part of European financiers, but it was well known that Russia could only be beaten partially and that the loans were therefore secure; Japan, on the other hand, though winning steadily, was in sore straits for gold, and the issue of loans by this power was a more difficult process than the one to which its beaten foe was subjected.

It is in this connection that France is in a unique position. Statistics tell us that the wealth of Great Britain is greater, though there is no such thing as an accurate estimate of such figures, but, for war purposes, it is not so much the total wealth that counts as its availability. In France there are but few great estates, as far as can be ascertained; there are more millionaires in London than in the whole of France, but there are several millions of peasant landowners, every one of them industrious, frugal and indomitably thrifty; the peasant who does not, from childhood upwards, hoard

small savings in coin, the artisan or domestic who does not possess a savings-bank book is an exception. Add to this the enormous gold reserves of the Bank of France and it will be understood how readily loans can be placed. A slightly enhanced rate of interest would bring out like magic these innumerable small holdings of gold,[1] which are only waiting for investment; in Great Britain, where an enormous proportion of the national capital is in a few hands, this would not be the case. The possessor of a million might have five per cent of his capital available for investment, the remainder being sunk in land, industrial or colonial ventures; it could not be realised in time of war owing to depressed quotations, whereas ten thousand possessors of an average of one hundred pounds would hold the bulk of their capital in a liquid state, so that, perhaps, half of it would be available at a low rate of interest. Thus the State would find at its disposal, instead of £50,000, about ten times that amount.

Wealth, potent as it may be in time of war, is probably more important still in time of peace; the hoarding tendencies of the French race are rather a drawback as regards commercial development, but they are not a really serious hindrance. The wealth of France is not based on commerce and industry, as is the case in Great Britain, but on agriculture. If the country were divided into great estates it would suffer from this locking up of capital, but as it is the property of some millions of small holders who work their land themselves, the need for ready money does not make itself

[1] It was estimated by the United States Treasury Department that, in 1906, there was twice as much gold per head in France as there is in Great Britain.

felt to any great extent. Now, as some three hundred years ago, in the days of Sully, the ploughed field and the pasture are the national Golconda. There is but little waste land in France; even in the centre of the country, on the mountain slopes, as in the lowlands of Gascony, the land that cannot be tilled has been afforested. There is no room for deer or pheasant preserves; of all businesses husbandry is the best understood and is fostered by the State by all possible means. To analyse the position of French agriculturists would be tempting, but it would need a book to do the subject justice. It is enough to note that the nation is not only entirely self-supporting as regards foodstuffs such as cereals, dairy produce and meat, but that it exports largely to foreign markets. The United States alone can rival France in this respect and even they will not be able to do so for an indefinite period if their population continues to increase. These facts have an important bearing upon the status of the Republic; to be self-supporting as regards the necessaries of bare life is far more important than to be predominant in trade and industry; these may wax or wane but, if agriculture is prosperous, the country will not suffer seriously; should, however, commerce and industry have displaced husbandry, as they appear to have done in Great Britain, what terrors may be bound up in their possible decadence, when the nation that has for many years purchased its food instead of producing it can no longer pay for it, I leave the reader to imagine.

In this respect, therefore, the position of France cannot be assailed; strong in war thanks to her army, she is strong in peace thanks to her wealth and to her independence of foreign producers; in fact, no other

important European state, except perhaps Russia, can boast of being so entirely self-contained. It must, of course, be understood that trade and industry also have their place in the scheme of national life in France and employ a large proportion of the population, but the object of these remarks is not so much to describe the position of the various classes as to see how it is that this comparatively small nation has attained so high a status in the European Concert. The points already noticed are doubtless the principal components of Gallic influence, but there are still a few to which we should devote our attention, not the least interesting being the extent to which France has been benefited by her geographical configuration and her general situation.

From this point of view France can be looked upon as the typical Western European state, particularly if we invest the word "Western" with the suggestion of Liberalism that it usually carries. Great Britain alone could hope to vie with her in this respect, but it must not be forgotten that this country, because it is an island, can never be a type but must remain an exception to all rules. Europe is a continent and, as islands invariably engender in their inhabitants peculiarities of character and government, Great Britain cannot be looked upon as typical. Islanders are at the same time strangely broad, thanks to their natural tendency to encourage oversea trade and to mix with men of many nations, and strangely narrow owing to the fact that the great mass of their population have but few opportunities of coming into contact with other races. As is shown in another chapter, frontier races are never of as pure a stock as are the hinterlanders ; they intermarry freely with the neighbouring alien, they become ac-

quainted with his language and his religion, whereas the islander does not come within the scope of these influences and has a natural tendency to become self-centred and to develop his character on definite national lines. It is for these reasons that we must set aside the possible claim of Great Britain to the title of typical Western European state; if we rule this country out, the only alternative is Germany, for the Mediterranean races are undoubtedly influenced by Africa and Russia is practically a modern Mongol state. But Germany also must yield to France in this respect; not only are her institutions of a conservative character foreign to Western ideals, but her remoteness from the sea, particularly from the beneficent Atlantic, has tended to isolate her from the rest of the world. It is true that, during the last thirty years and particularly during the last decade, her foreign trade has developed so enormously as to invest her with the advantages that have for centuries been peculiar to Great Britain; moreover, the remarkable current of German emigration, followed by the return of successful colonists, has imported the broadening factor of British, American and Latin civilisation. In times to come, when Germany has developed still further, when her population of sixty millions has doubled, which should be the case within half a century, her claim to be representative will be undeniable, more especially as she is likely to alter the map of Europe not only to the detriment of her southern neighbours, but also to that of the West.

In the present state of things, however, though the German peril may loom large upon the horizon, France remains the true representative of the West. Her geographical position would no doubt be enough to

secure this. Cut off, on the south and on the south-east by lofty mountains, she has been able to develop on lines that do not materially differ from those of the North, a far more healthy and vigorous evolution than that of the South; her coast-line on three seas has allowed her commerce to radiate in all directions, thus gathering for the nation impressions that have made it a "nation of the world," in the same sense as similar intercourse with his fellows makes a "man of the world." However intolerant French governments may have been, they have never been hostile to foreign arts and letters, but have acclimatised and incorporated them for the greater benefit of the race.

Thus France has at the same time enjoyed some of the advantages of Great Britain and all those of a continental power; on her north-eastern frontier she has always been accessible to the modifying action of her neighbours; on her southern and south-eastern frontier her natural boundaries have long protected her against weakening infiltration. On the other hand, her immense coast-line has bred in her people the spirit of adventure which has done so much for Great Britain. Thus France has always been before other important nations in the gentle arts of peace; she felt the Renaissance at least half a century before Great Britain did and was a modern power when her eastern neighbour was a congeries of petty states cowering before the growing might of Prussia. The influence of mountains, rivers and seas is a subtle one and all the more powerful for that reason; in the case of France it is more obvious than usual because geographical features are in her case more pronounced than in that of many other nations.

To this, therefore, we can indirectly trace a great deal

of the peculiar glamour that attaches to the Gallic race; we are mostly made aware of it through the medium of consequent features, but we are invariably brought back to geography. We must not conclude that a synthetic process could be applied and that, given a Frenchman or even an accurate estimate of the soul of the nation, we could reconstruct the country by a series of deductions. It is not impossible that different conditions might have produced similar results; inasmuch as $2 + 2 = 4$ and $3 + 1 = 4$, any other nation could theoretically be conceived the development of which would have been identical under different circumstances. But, leaving aside such speculations, it must be acknowledged that, at the present time, France stands alone as the representative of Western European ideals and in this finds a solid base for the status that is hers in the world.

This status being acknowledged, a consequence inevitably follows which is singular because it is at the same time a result and a cause. Centuries of influence have at all times conferred upon the possessor of that influence the privilege of spreading his language, if not his institutions; conversely, the general cultivation of a given language has always resulted in increased influence for the land from which it originates. This will be apparent to any one who considers the status of English in the world and who realises how, not only the scattered parts of the Empire, but countries that separated from it after a bloody war are bound together by the intangible but iron link of a common language and the literature that is born of it. The importance of language as a political and economic influence can be more easily underrated than overestimated; as soon,

however, as we consider historical fact, its importance at once becomes obvious. We need not go back from the present day to examine the fierce strife which was necessary to crush out French in Alsace and in Lorraine, semi-French as the former province may have been. Before our very eyes we see the same struggle proceeding between Polish and Danish on the one hand and German on the other; in South Africa the perpetual conflict of English and Dutch persists in spite of the conciliatory methods of the British government. Erse threatens a revival in Ireland, for the further complication of national problems; within so tiny an area as Switzerland three languages are energetic rivals.

This enumeration could be supplemented *ad infinitum* if we were to delve ever so slightly in the records of history, but this is hardly necessary, as the above instances are decisive enough to show how important a factor a language is. To French, therefore, we can trace at once much of the influence of France in the world and a portion of her status in Europe. It is not that the language is spoken by a large nation, for it is not likely that the French-speaking peoples of the world aggregate much more than fifty million persons; if we were to count heads, French would immediately be eclipsed by English, German, Russian and Spanish. Foreign influence is not gained so much from the bulk of the population that speaks a given tongue as from the number of foreigners who have studied it for business or other reasons. It is in this respect that French dominates any but the English language, which has gained an unassailable position, not only because the peoples that can boast of British descent are numerous, but because Great Britain, being the first in the field,

has captured the trade of the world and rendered it quasi-essential that a merchant should understand English or engage an employee conversant with its use. This is fully demonstrated by the spread of the study of German which coincides, year for year, with the development of Germany's foreign trade.

No student of English, of the English of the Bible, of Addison, of Fielding, will deny its rather sombre beauty, its suppleness and the vastness of its vocabulary; yet, as a rule, foreigners do not study English for pleasure: they do so with the definite object of using it for business purposes. English has no great literary renown on the Continent, not because it has the reputation of being an uncouth dialect, but because its beauties have always been eclipsed in the foreign mind by its commercial possibilities. The very reverse has been the case as regards French; its study has never offered great pecuniary attractions, for a knowledge of it would only facilitate intercourse with a comparatively small nation confined within a small country. If French has attained its present status, it is because France was first in the field of literature and thus gained the position that English won in commerce.

The knowledge of French is an accomplishment; where its elegance is not acknowledged it is looked upon as an essential supplement to "polite" education. Indeed, in the case of educated women of all nations, the study of French has become at least equal in importance to that of taste, Shakespeare and the musical glasses. It is a truism to say that French is the language of diplomacy; this is, nowadays, hardly a fact, but it still to a certain extent holds this position in

virtue of its conciseness and clearness; here again we see the result of past epochs when France dominated the politics of the world. It is, however, far more important to touch the people than to touch the ambassadors; if French confined its sway to the latter it might ultimately be supplanted by Volapuk or Esperanto. The important point is that French is used as a medium of intercourse by the educated classes of Europe and is studied in their schools. The splendid British ignorance of foreign languages is fast disappearing; on the Continent such a state of things has never prevailed. Practically every well-educated German or Russian has a more or less extensive knowledge of the French language; in certain circles of society, particularly in Russia, where the guests are cosmopolitan, it serves as the usual medium of conversation. Even in such countries as Portugal and Brazil its use is widespread and, day by day, we can see among our immediate acquaintances a growing desire for its acquisition.

I do not want to make a molehill into a mountain, but, as regards the matter, one is far too much inclined to make a mountain into a molehill. The dissemination of the French language has tended in an extraordinary degree to the reading of French literature, which has been the means of spreading, if not an accurate impression of France, at least French ideas and French theories; the movement is not likely to lose its efficacy, for a language, once well established, does not die out: Latin and Greek, useless as they may be in practice, are likely to survive many more centuries of unmitigated mercantilism.

To these causes, then, may be traced the peculiar

position of France in Europe. In spite of the fact that the growth of neighbouring giants has dwarfed the nation as regards bulk and muscular power, it still enjoys a favoured position. Shorn of many of their colonial possessions, stagnant as regards population, the French have secured for themselves a "place in the sun" as they aptly put it; free, wealthy and liberal in institutions, France remains in the eyes of the world a centre of a peculiar nature. She may not be the land of the strongest, but she can hold her own and develop on traditional lines the arts of peace and the cult of the beautiful; thus she cannot, for many years to come, lose a status that, because it is hers by merit, is hers by right.

CHAPTER XII

THE BIRTHRATE

MEGALOMANIA is the order of the day; thousands of square miles, millions of people, hundreds of millions of trade: such are the criteria by which we judge communities. Borne along on the wave that produces the more unintelligent forms of Imperialism, we are given to appreciating quantity irrespective of quality and to looking upon the former as all-sufficient in itself. As a natural result, a certain section is afflicted with micromania and is unable to conceive of matters exceeding in importance the immediate affairs of their district. Neither standard is correct; the very fact that both are extreme shows that their value is small: extremes have a permanent place in history-making, but only as the leaven which produces antagonistic reactions.

The criterion of size has been applied even to the question of population; the magnitude of the latter impresses us even when we try to resist the impression, and it is with a sort of incredulous amazement that we see the Russian colossus staggering under the blows of pigmy Japan. We see a Belgium or a Switzerland, where the average trade and savings per head compare favourably with those of the British Empire or the United States, and yet retain a vague idea that, in

some way or another, their citizens deserve our sympathy for belonging to so small a community.

When trade is booming and unemployment rife, when population teems and yet starves, then, in our opinion, the State is on its way to power and greatness. To those who subconsciously harbour these views I would commend the Chinese proverb :—

> When the sword is rusted and the sickle glitters ;
> When bakers go on horseback and doctors go afoot ;
> When the steps of the schools are worn out and
> When grass grows on those of the Courts of Law,
> Then is the State well governed.

The Chinese view is, no doubt, horribly parochial, but it is certainly sound.

Rightly or wrongly, however, the popular view seems to be that a teeming population is one of the components of national greatness. If we take the world as we find it, divided into nations, we are reluctantly driven to the conclusion that such a view is correct; in itself a very thick population is not an unmixed blessing ; but, if we consider the State, it is obvious that its interests are best served by a large preponderance of births over deaths. This proceeds from one cause only, from the competition that prevails over the whole of the world, between nations as well as between classes and individuals ; the large and vigorous races devour the small and puny, and feel that, if their strength increases, they will be able to crush out rivals who are still formidable.

To have a hundred battleships is nothing if another nation has two hundred ; so we naturally arrive at a competition in armament where the nation whose funds and ambition last out the longest secures the preponder-

ance; in the same manner, increasing population means growing influence, because the armed hosts become more numerous and thriving industries attract gold to the land. When two neighbouring nations follow different roads, when the one sees every day its citizens multiplying, its exchequer receipts swelling, its trade increasing, whilst the other remains stagnant, the more vigorous organism must eventually kill off the weaker one, in this case, either by right of conquest or by slow absorption.

The birthrate is a test of national competition; so long as nations continue to exist as hostile groupings, armed to the teeth and perfecting their weapons in the intervals of Hague Conferences, so long will its continual increase be a condition of national security and power. "Every year," said von Moltke in this connection, "we win a battle against France." The right-hand man of Bismarck spoke truly there, knowing as he did that every new birth meant an accession of strength to his country and that its weight must eventually tell. From the national point of view it hardly matters whether the country can feed its citizens or not; if the limits of its productive capacity are overstepped it can either permeate and eventually enslave or annex the neighbouring state, or it can found powerful colonies whose influence will be cast into the balance in favour of the mother country. From the national or political point of view, therefore, we are compelled to admit that the fearful strain must continue, that ever more hungry mouths must be fed, just as we must be ready to give of our blood and treasure more and yet more. Such are the terms on which national existence can be secured; the Socialist looks upon their acceptance as monstrous folly, the Imperialist as something

perfectly normal. Constructively, the Socialist proposes to break down national barriers, whilst the Imperialist trusts to nature to regulate our numbers; time alone will show whose theory is sound: it need not be decided now, as the law of Malthus does not yet apply to the earth. Our problem is not to feed our men and women, but to distribute them over the whole of the universe; yet a thought may well be given to the solution of the problem of our ever-increasing numbers.

Even from the national point of view, however, a large population is not an unmixed blessing. Past a certain point emigration becomes a factor of national life, and political problems of the gravest nature arise: conflicts with neighbouring countries, jealousies, isolation spring from it; colonies forget their allegiance, rise up in arms or conduct tariff wars against the mother country; political anxiety grows with the people, and their war expenditure increases in a still greater ratio. But it is not nationally speaking that truly serious problems come into being; the perils that follow in the train of a growing birthrate are not usually political; a large excess of births means abundant labour (and as a result growing capital) and large armies which, in the present state of the world, mean political health for the State. The evils that arise from it are not political but social; if we distinguish between "political" as affecting the State and "social" as affecting the individual, we are at once able to draw fine distinctions and our point of view may change.

Roughly speaking, that which is good for the individual is good for the State, but it is not true that that which is good for the State is good for the individual; we have arrived above at the conclusion that a high

birthrate is essential if the State is to flourish, even to survive, but if we consider man apart from the nation, as a citizen of the world, our conclusion is modified and we even arrive at a diametrically opposite opinion. Socially speaking, we must distinguish between countries; there is no general application of the social laws, as their incidence is falsified because of the non-social conditions of the world. If population were distributed in exact ratio to the local productivity of the soil, social laws would be everywhere applicable and assertions would need no qualification. Such is, however, not the case; we find extraordinary differences in density, varying between one man to the square mile and thousands to the square acre; moreover, the towns have everywhere a tendency to grow and the rural districts to suffer from emigration. For these reasons, it is not easy to make sweeping statements, and it becomes necessary to distinguish between "new" and "old" countries. In "new" countries—i.e. countries sparsely populated, such as Canada, Siberia, Brazil, etc.—the problem of population does not affect the individual adversely from the social point of view; however large his family may be, land and employment are easily available and, in fact, large families mean comfort and content for the elder generation. The parents can count on a measure of support from their children; the family becomes a powerful unit of which the clan is the perfect type, and its size makes as much for its private prosperity as for that of the nation that claims its allegiance.

But it is not with such countries that we are concerned, for France is an "old" country, old in the ordinary sense of "having for many years been affected by civilisation" and also as regards the density of her popu-

lation. In this case the social law militates in a different direction ; it is no longer in the interest of the individual to have a large family because it does not readily find employment or acquire wealth, but only increases his burdens. An ever-increasing population, however advantageous it may be for the State, only means a lower standard of living for the individual, ceaseless exertion to feed those whom he has brought into the world, with the prospect of sentencing his children to a struggle yet more acute.

I cannot discover any moral reason for the breeding of men beyond a certain point; should that "certain point" be attained in the opinion of the sociologist, it is likely that doctrinaire moralists and theologians would, as bitterly as ever, contend that more men should be allowed to come and make still harder our struggle for life. It is, however, not very likely that this question will be put to the test, for, by a singular and merciful law of nature, fecundity decreases among the peoples of the earth at a rate that compares with their increasing civilisation. Other factors than diminishing fecundity are, of course, also at work, but their presence is also traceable to civilisation. Moralists call this "selfishness," but the most ferocious denunciations come, as a rule, from celibate priests and should not disturb our minds. At the present time, high birthrates are confined to the lower races; it is highest among the Bantus and the Mongols, healthy in body but undeveloped in mind; it is lowest among Europeans, whose civilisation is more advanced and, among them, it is clear that the birthrate of the nations of the West, whose intellectual development is the more notable, is lower than that of the ignorant East.

In no European country is this state of things so

pronounced as in France; it need not, therefore, be inferred that she stands at the head of civilised nations, but this is not impossible. I do not want to compare the cultured Englishman, German or Russian unfavourably with the Frenchman of equal attainments, as culture creates an international class, but if we take the nation as a whole and include the lowest classes, it can be contended that the culture line includes a greater proportion of the French race than of any other people.

It is such a peculiar fact that fertility and the liking for large families decreases as civilisation increases, that of late years we have seen the birthrate shrink in Great Britain in an automatic fashion. In France there is practically an equilibrium between births and deaths; the manner in which this has been attained will be more fully referred to: meanwhile the following tables will prove instructive:—

Population of France.

1700	19,660,320	
1801	27,349,003	
1821	30,461,873	
1831	32,569,283	
1841	34,230,178	
1856	36,039,364	
1861	37,386,313	
1866	38,067,064	
1872	36,102,921	
1881	37,672,048	
1886	38,218,903	
1891	38,342,948	
1896	38,517,975	
1901	38,961,945	
1905	39,300,000	(estimated)
1906	39,400,000	,,
1907	39,500,000	,,

The numbers before 1872 do not compare very well with the figures for that year and for those that follow, owing to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, but the earlier ones are rather of academic interest and our attention need be given only to the last thirty-five years.

The following schedule of Births and Deaths is also of considerable value:—

Year.	Births.	Deaths.
1894	855,388	815,620
1895	834,173	851,986
1896	865,506	771,886
1897	859,107	751,019
1898	843,933	810,073
1899	847,627	816,233
1900	827,297	853,285
1901	857,274	784,870
1902	845,378	761,434
1903	826,712	753,606
1904	818,229	761,203
1905	807,292	770,171
1906	806,847	780,796

These figures do not include still births, which in France average 39,000 a year, or under 5 per cent. This figure is rather high for European countries, for the rate is 4 per cent in the Netherlands, 3 per cent in Austria and Germany and 2 per cent in Hungary. It is, however, about equal to the Belgian and the Italian rate.

These two foregoing tables, placed in juxtaposition, form a most suggestive array of figures, and allow of conclusions being drawn with great ease; it appears, however, necessary to emphasise a few points, particularly by means of averages which these totals do

not include, though they constitute a fairer basis to work upon.

If we consider these last thirteen years, which coincide roughly with an extreme development of advanced thought, we are at once struck by the shrinkage that has taken place in births; within thirteen years it was no less than 48,500 per annum, and it is noteworthy that, after a period of recovery, the fall began again in 1900 and has continued ever since, so much so that the births in 1906 were over 50,000 short of the total for 1901. From the national point of view these figures are alarming, but, before giving way to pessimism, the often omitted factor of the deathrate must be taken into account. In 1894 it is true that the births numbered 48,500 more than in 1906, but deaths numbered 35,000 more: it appears from this that the remarkable superiority of 1894 is reduced to a difference of 13,000, not a very important matter; if, however, we consider the last six years (1900–1906) we have more grounds for anxiety, for births shrink by over 50,000 during the period, whilst deaths only decrease by 4,000, leaving a net comparison loss of 46,000.

As regards this particular period, it is interesting to note that, whereas the births have decreased regularly, deaths have fluctuated considerably. It is for this reason that it appears fairer to average the period 1894–1906, reserving of course the conclusions that may be formed after considering the last five or six years. The average births per annum during these thirteen years numbered 837,000 and the average deaths 790,000; it is therefore premature to cry out on the plea that France is a dying nation, for an annual increase of 47,000 in her population is worth taking into account. The reserved

conclusions are, however, damnatory; the period 1900–1906 shows a steady and considerable decrease in births and there is every prospect that it will continue. If we consider the whole period we find after every bumper year a period of depression, then another good year *not so good as the bumper year*, then another depression and a slight recovery: thus 1901 marks a recovery, but it falls far short of 1896. It is practically certain that either 1907 or 1908 will show a slight increase, but after this the fall will be resumed.

These facts are particularly striking when we consider the deaths over the same period; they fluctuate to such an extent that we can only arrive at one conclusion, viz.: that the automatic decrease in deaths has stopped. The advance in medical science, hygiene and the increasing use of sanatoria have contributed enormously during the last decade to the reduction of the death-rate, but they have their limitations. It should be noted that deaths must not be compared absolutely with births, for they also include the considerable number of adult and diseased foreigners who, every year, settle in France. For instance, if we compare 1896 and 1905 we find the total deaths about equal, but the 1905 figure refers to a population greater by about 800,000, so that the deathrate shows a reduction.

The deathrate is the crux of the question; it cannot be denied that the birthrate is shrinking and that, for the last three years, it has been below the average for the last twelve, nor can it be expected to recover to any notable extent; thus if the population of France is to increase, it will not be owing to more numerous births. A further reduction in the deathrate may of course take place; there is no theoretical reason why common

knowledge of hygiene, national sobriety and improved housing should not considerably extend life, but in practice I fear that the ever-growing industrial activities of France will not make for longer lives. With the present population of the country it is not likely that deaths can be brought much below 750,000 per annum, as against an average of 790,000 in the last thirteen years. It should be said that it does not appear entirely desirable that life should be prolonged beyond a certain point; the schools that suggest the lethal chamber at the age of sixty, or even forty, are no doubt going too far, but it is obvious that a nation which kept up its numbers, not by the accession of healthy children but by raising the age of its citizens to a patriarchal degree, would not be in a position to compete with other and more vigorous races.

The foregoing appears to land us in an impasse; it is true that in 1906 births exceeded deaths by 26,000, but it is also true that

in 1901	the excess	was	73,000
„ 1902	„	„	84,000
„ 1903	„	„	73,000
„ 1904	„	„	57,000
„ 1905	„	„	37,000

so that the *gain* has been almost regularly smaller; we can reasonably conclude that, within a few years, the difference will no longer be in favour of births and that the population will decrease. That this has, however, not formerly been the case can be inferred from the table giving the population of France, the figures of which are as reasonably applicable to the future as those of the second table. If we select in the first table the year 1896 (simply because it is a census year and for no

other reason) and compare it with the estimate for 1905 (39,300,000), we find that the population of France has increased by 783,000 during the decade ; if, on the other hand, we examine the table of births and deaths, we find that the increase should only be 564,000. The discrepancy is explained by the fact that foreigners immigrate into France at the average rate of 22,000 per annum and that, therefore, during the decade under examination, France gained some 220,000 new inhabitants, most of whom naturalise, marry and are merged into the French race.

France has, for many years, been an attractive field for the emigrant, so much so that, at the present time, about 1,050,000 foreigners are registered as settled, or 2·7 per cent of the total population. Immigration is the saving of France as it has been the making of the United States and other American nations ; it will continue and increase with opportunity. I do not contend that, nationally speaking, this is altogether desirable, but, on the whole, the immigration of Belgians and Italians (two-thirds of the total) does not mean invasion by alien races, but by men who are akin to the French as regards origin, religion, language and customs ; this immigration is not to be compared with that of the Poles and Jews into Great Britain, because those races are not readily assimilated, whereas the Belgians and the Italians, being Latins, are absorbed at once by the French race.

It is therefore on immigration that French hopes must be based ; admitting that there is no likelihood of a reaction against a low birthrate, the praiseworthy efforts of M. Piot must be sterile. Indeed, it is practically certain that the habits of life and the marriage customs

of the French, if persisted in, tend to a further reduction in births. Is it necessary to say that *régimes* and religions may fall, but that customs and habits remain untouched? It is possible to imagine another political revolution in France, but that the habits of families should be cast into the melting-pot oversteps the bounds of the most optimistic credulity.

At the root of a falling birthrate, among civilised nations, lies in the first place a decrease in fertility; a highly interesting report on the subject was issued in 1906 by Mr. David Heron with reference to the United Kingdom, and followed by articles by Mr. Sidney Webb, Sir James Crichton Browne, etc., all tending to show that this is inevitably the case. That which is happening in Great Britain occurs to a greater extent in France; the fecundity of the nation has suffered, apparently in direct ratio to the development of its civilisation. Whereas, however, in Great Britain, the birthrate still exceeds the deathrate by nine to ten per thousand, in France the two are practically equal; I do not, for this reason, maintain that France enjoys in every way a higher standard of civilisation, but it is at least singular that we should witness the phenomenon in its most pronounced form in the Western nations, France, Great Britain and, to a certain extent, Germany.

There is no doubt that the French, particularly the townsmen, are no longer a sturdy race; their physique is not good, nor is their general health particularly satisfactory, the male sex being the more affected. The morality of the Frenchman is far from being as lax as it is believed, but there is no doubt that it is, on the whole, less rigid than that of the Englishman; it is not certain that this state of things affects national fertility,

for Germany still boasts of a very high birthrate in spite of morals which do not, in any appreciable degree, differ from those of France. It is possible that late marriages, which have long been customary among the middle classes in France, are at the root of the question, but it should be borne in mind that a strong reaction against the practice has set in, which may ultimately affect the question to an important degree. It is also evident that French physique is being much improved by compulsory military service and by the increasing popularity of athletics, so that here again we find grounds for believing that national fertility may increase to a notable extent.

There is, however, another aspect of the question which the learned observers, to whose researches reference has been made, seem to have lost sight of. Their blindness must be apparent rather than real, perhaps even assumed, for experience must have shown them that other factors besides fertility influence the birthrate in Western Europe. Whether they feared to enter upon a thorny subject likely to offend the somewhat prudish ears of the public, I do not pretend to say, but it is to be noted that Dr. Ingram, the Bishop of London, alone has spoken frankly and fearlessly on the far more important subject of the wilful restriction of the birthrate.

That is, in France, the crux of the question. The French do not admit that they are in any way bound to bring into the world families which they cannot hope to rear and educate successfully. I do not intend to enter upon the discussion of a subject which involves moral and religious issues; it is certain that there is a great deal of claptrap in the anti-malthusian theory

and that much bombastic rhetoric has been indulged in by those who believe that ever-growing population makes for the happiness of the world.

There are in France, as in most other countries, individuals who prefer to devote their energies to preaching in favour of a high birthrate, rather than to tariff reform, anti-vivisection, temperance, etc., but they do not at present seem likely to provoke a social revolution. The French race deliberately restricts the birthrate. If we leave aside the more ignorant sections of the population, who remain too careless to concern themselves with the question, we find it notorious that families are artificially restricted. Public opinion not only acquiesces in the practice, but it has a tendency to scoff at big families and to look upon their parents as devoid of common sense. Among the middle classes, taking the word in its widest sense, three children are looked upon as a large family, two as more than enough and one as the rule, childless families being more numerous than in any part of the world. The figures of the last census yield most suggestive figures in this connection; one family out of two has two children or less, and in fifty-five per cent of these cases there is but one child, whilst no less then seventeen per cent of French families are childless. These figures, particularly the last, are amazing; *one million eight hundred thousand couples are without offspring*, and past records show that this state of things has prevailed for many years.

The middle classes are not alone affected; restriction prevails among the peasantry, whose frugality and foresight lead them to understand that their beloved fields can only escape indefinite partition if their families are small. Thus the working class alone

remains and the more enlightened sections are following the movement, so that increase takes place exclusively among the less desirable classes. The more degraded, the poorer, the more ignorant the class, the higher its birthrate; such is the state of things in Great Britain as in France, with the result that, in both countries, the State would be swamped with those whose heredity is poor if infantile mortality did not redress the balance. The degraded classes have a high birthrate but also a high deathrate; this is a cruel law which Nature applies automatically so that, if we succeed in improving the lot of the submerged tenth, as soon as their offspring become desirable their deathrate will decrease in proportion.

This state of things prevails in France to a lesser degree than in Great Britain, because the poverty line does not include such a large proportion of the population. There are no reliable statistics that would enable us to institute a comparison with those of Mr. Charles Booth, but it is quite certain (obvious to the observer) that there is in France no question of "thirteen millions on the verge of starvation"; thus there is no reason to expect a plethora of undesirables in France.

If we take a general view of the foregoing statements, we are induced to ask ourselves what are the results of this peculiar state of things. As is the case with national questions, they are of a twofold nature, political and social. The general political considerations that have already been enunciated apply to France in every respect, but there are two special directions in which the low birthrate affects the political status of the country: the colonies and the German peril.

As has been said in another chapter, French colonies

are in a parlous condition and it is quite clear that they cannot flourish unless white settlers are forthcoming. So long as the birthrate remains low, the individual will not be forced out of his own country and the colonies will remain empty; it must be remembered that the formation of colonies is purely a political question and that a thing may be socially excellent though politically detestable. Thus the French Government may well deplore the state of things, however satisfactory it may appear to the citizen. None but the most ambitious members of the population turn towards the colonies; only a small proportion gives way to the *wanderlust* or to a desire for adventure, so small as to be a negligible factor. Where peoples have emigrated in large numbers we always find a compelling force, sometimes persecution, political or religious, but nearly always sheer necessity. The Germans emigrated in great numbers owing to overcrowding and because their industry was ill-organised; the English, Scotch and Irish, either because their land system was bad or the land itself barren; Italian emigration is due to poverty; Belgian and Swiss emigration to overcrowding.

In France there is no overcrowding and, in most classes, comfort prevails; thus there is no driving power and the population is content to remain, as a result of which the colonies have fallen more and more into the hands of the foreigner and are nothing but an incubus. From a political point of view this is a misfortune, but it shrinks into insignificance by the side of the German peril. Alarmism is detestable and I do not intend to ascribe sinister motives to Germany, but over and above German Imperialism we have to face physical facts. The area of Germany is about the same as that

of France and its population exceeds that of its western neighbour by over fifty per cent; it is not likely that German soil has reached the limit of its productivity, but it must eventually do so if the Empire continues to gain its annual million of citizens. Expansion is already necessary, as is demonstrated by the perpetual friction between Germany and other nations; devoid of colonies as an outlet, rich, powerful and growing, is it conceivable that Germany will bear indefinitely the pressure from within of her million citizens?

France is the natural outlet, not only because she is the *Erbfeind*, the hereditary enemy, but because her fair fields lie on the western side of Germany; some inscrutable ethnic law directs the march of nations towards the West and it is not likely to be proved incorrect in this case. I do not contend with the professional alarmist that Germany wants war, but it appears inevitable and, in that case, France must be her obvious quarry. A Germany with sixty millions of inhabitants is already a world factor; will a Germany with a hundred millions of citizens content herself with her limited acres?

The German peril is, for France, a very real thing; to prophesy in matters political is always dangerous, but the outlook for France is not altogether reassuring in this direction. Her army will never exceed in efficiency the trained German legions,[1] and the disparity in reserves which already exists is increasing every day; should the French birthrate shrink still further, the political difficulty will assume a still more threatening aspect. The

[1] A year's service in a French regiment has fully convinced me that the dislike with which most of the privates fulfil their military obligations does not tend to promote their efficiency; stringent methods, such as those which are applied in Germany, are unsuited to a hot-blooded race.—W. L. G.

problem of the landed rich, scattered among the toiling landless millions, is comparable with the situation of these two neighbouring races; in both cases force must play a part and the struggle is not likely to be more merciful when two strong and ambitious races are at grips than when the wealthy find it necessary to defend their property against the ever more menacing State.

Dark as is the political outlook, the social state of things is in France excellent. Her population seems to have arrived roughly at a state of equipoise between the mouths to be fed and the area that is to bear the burden; if we admit the fertility of the United Kingdom to be equal to that of France, a premise that the agronome may not accept, we find that the population of France is 190 to the square mile as compared with 347 in Great Britain. If we make every allowance for imported foodstuffs on the one hand and for the waste of arable land in the United Kingdom on the other, we are driven to the conclusion that population is, in France, comparatively sparse. Thus the French are enabled to live in a state of comfort unknown to the working classes in this country, taking the term in its broadest sense, and to practise thrift as a matter of course. For every adult who dies a child survives who, in course of time, automatically replaces him and enjoys the use of his goods or his occupation; there is no overcrowding, no desperate need for seeking openings, no pressure to create new resources. This may be politically execrable, but it is socially excellent as it makes for the happiness of the individual.

Unemployment exists in France as in other European countries, but to a lesser degree, partly because half the people are settled on the land, but especially because

there is no plethora of labour; in every case, what unemployment there is proceeds either from a too rapid migration towards an industrial centre or from a local crisis.

Small population makes for personal comfort. The struggle for life is not too intense in France and allows the people to enjoy the good things of this world that more imperial states deny to their citizens; this makes for the solidity and stability of families and ensures the child the maximum of care, education and capital, that its parents can give. It is in great part owing to her low birthrate that France is probably one of the most prosperous countries in the world and that her gold reserves per head exceed the known averages of other European nations. The grinding poverty of our industrial population is unknown in France; other factors, such as temperance and thrift, come into consideration, but the small size of the population makes for fair wages and fair rents. In this connection it should be noted that the terrible housing difficulties of British cities are practically unknown in France. This is partly due to the fact that there are no large estates in the towns and that keen competition keeps the rents down, but the overcrowding peril is not in France the seven-headed hydra that we know in this country. Overcrowding, dangerous for the parents, is fatal for the child; in France, the smallness of families effectively settles the question. We all know the results of overcrowding—social, moral, spiritual and racial—and, if a small population does away with these dangers, the position of France becomes truly enviable.

As regards the land, a small population is a blessing when it corresponds, as exactly as it seems to do in

France, to the arable area. Rural exodus has, of late years, been causing alarm and it is traceable to individual ambition and restlessness only, for there is no "land question" before a nation of peasant proprietors. Thus, about half the people earn their living on the land, as opposed to about ten per cent in wealthy England. Small estates are not unduly split up and pass easily from father to sons, the other children, if any, being provided for in cash, which enables them to purchase their own holding. Thus the people are not driven from the land, as they would be if their fathers indulged in the questionable luxury enjoyed by British agricultural labourers of families ranging between four and a dozen.

This picture is rather idyllic, but its truth appears when the observer passes through the well-tilled fields of France or mixes with the cheerful well-fed, well-housed working class; oblivious of political dangers the French continue to enjoy their lives soberly, to progress in education and refinement and to cultivate the arts of peace. It is terrible to think that the time may come when payment for prosperity will be exacted to the full; the French have attained a high social standard, but the time may yet come when their independence will only be preserved thanks to international jealousy. For the sake of civilisation and the happiness of the French people, it is to be hoped that, for many years yet, they will not be drawn further into the maelstrom of military competition and of cut-throat commercialism.

CHAPTER XIII

EDUCATION

THE difficulties that confront one who wishes to give an adequate idea of any British educational problem are not absent when a foreign system is under consideration; indeed they are intensified. We do not as yet exactly know what is good and what is bad education; we hesitate between the classics and modern science and attempt, with alternating enthusiasm and diffidence, to break the bonds of custom and red tape. To describe is however easier than to suggest, but it may at once be said that first-hand knowledge of British systems is not very necessary in this particular case, on account of the considerable difference that exists between the various public schools and even between elementary schools. So much depends on the personality of a headmaster and of the staff, that it is fruitless and unfair to generalise. There is but little doubt that the product of Eton is different from that of Rugby, though dissimilarities may vanish in after life; in the same manner, the pupils of two Council schools may differ to a considerable degree, according to the particular personalities under whose control they were placed.

These remarks apply to France in a lesser degree than to Great Britain, thanks to the highly centralised machinery that controls education. There are athletic

schools and working schools in France, just as there are "swats" and "slacks" at any British institution, but the fact that education is in the hands of the State prevents contrasts from being very strongly marked. Thus the difference that exists between the pupil of the *Lycée Condorcet* and of the *Collège Chaptal*, the nearest French equivalents to public schools, is no greater than that which separates a Paddington Council school from another in Battersea; there are no distinguishing characteristics such as those which hallmark the English public-school boy; in the case of one Paris school, perhaps, the *Lycée Janson*, a superiority of muscular development is apparent, but a single case of individuality is surely insufficient.

Thus it is possible to generalise about French schools to a far greater degree than in the case of British institutions. Whereas in this country private enterprise and private benefactions have led to the jealous upholding of individuality, in France the State, following in the steps of Napoleon, has tended to bring the schools into line. It is for this reason that reliable information, collected by Englishmen, is available on the subject, whilst French critics usually go astray unless they are warned that no British public school is absolutely representative of its fellows; as they almost invariably laud the British system to the skies this has been forgiven them, but we must not forget that their errors are due to a reaction from French theories of education, which have hitherto been utterly opposed to those of England.

As has already been said in the first chapter of this book, it is exceedingly difficult for an outsider to judge a foreign institution; if this is so in the case of a

Parliament, how much greater must be the obstacles when we attempt to analyse a problem complicated by the ungaugeable factor of the boy mind! Even a British schoolmaster, accustomed as he may be to its vagaries, must bring into his investigation a spirit of continual comparison which often vitiates his deductions. It is this very difficulty which enables one who has spent six years in one of the Paris *Lycées*, which have left vivid memories behind them, to paint a true picture.

Though these years were spent in the most athletic school in France, the examination results of which were not remarkably brilliant, the education given in it may be taken as a fair sample of the average standard of learning in a French public school, however superior it may have been in the playing fields.

A notable feature of French education in general is the extent to which all classes have been benefited by it; up to the age of thirteen it is, as in Great Britain, compulsory, and has reached the masses without difficulty, particularly in the towns. Its uniformity makes it sometimes impossible to recognise the various classes; if these exist in France, they do not manifest themselves so openly by manner and speech as they do in Great Britain, and particularly in England. The peculiarities of delivery, attitude and expression, that are in Great Britain confined to certain classes, are to be found in France in individuals whose training should have been different; thus it is always difficult to class a Frenchman, a most desirable state of things in a Republican State. There is, of course, a perceptible difference between the product of the *Ecole Communale* and the *Lycée*, but it does not always persist in after life.

This similarity might be due to the fact that the *Ecole Communale* is so very good and the *Lycée* so very bad; in any case it is noteworthy that continentals in general are not readily classified, owing to their pronounced external characteristics, such as gesticulation, violence of voice and expression, etc. However ridiculous the stage Frenchman may be, the picture is founded on fact; as the majority of Frenchmen have common and dominating mannerisms, minor differences pass unnoticed even by other Frenchmen.

To pass from general to particular questions, a brief comparison should be made between the *Ecoles Communales* and the elementary schools of Great Britain. The status of the *Ecole Communale* is very different from that of its British equivalent; deservedly or not, a certain stigma is in England attached to the word "Elementary" when applied to a school, and frantic efforts are often made by small tradesmen and commercial men to send their sons to an "Academy" run by a person whom the French graphically describe as a "soupmonger," in which they are not likely to be better trained, but which will confer upon them a status that may impress the unenlightened. This is mainly due to the fact that State organisations invariably suggest to the popular mind a workhouse or a hospital, and it is notorious that the masses are often ready to suffer to an inconceivable degree rather than appeal to these. In France, where education is almost altogether in the hands of the State, this distinction does not exist; to send a child to an *Ecole Communale* instead of to a *Lycée* only means choosing between different grades, but not between different systems. I do not contend that the pupils are drawn from the same

classes, but it is undeniable that many children are to be found in the *Ecole Communale* whom one might have expected to find their way into the *Lycée*. Indeed, some parents, who are well able to pay the fees of the latter, deliberately select the lower institution and complete the child's education by sending it to a *Lycée* on completion of the course.

Such a state of things would not prevail if the education given in the *Ecole Communale* were unsatisfactory; no nation is more keenly anxious for the welfare of its children than are the French. This is explained by the smallness of families and by the fact that in a single child are often centred the ambitions of its parents. It is an obvious fact that the working classes of France are better educated and generally happier than those of Great Britain; if we make allowances for natural tendencies, above all for better housing, for sobriety and thrift, we are still compelled to connect with education the comparative correctness of the speech of the working classes, their appreciation of the arts and the efficiency of the women as regards household economy and cooking. For all this the *Ecole Communale* is in great part responsible, not only through its teaching, which is sound and modelled somewhat on the same lines as the equivalent courses in the *Lycée*, but because it raises the general tone of working-class children and makes them more receptive and more able to assimilate home training. I do not know whether the elementary schools attain such a result but, again allowing for the indescribably evil conditions of British housing, intemperance and general poverty, one may be permitted to doubt it; the inefficiency of domestic servants in every direction, particularly the incapacity of the British

cook, the wastefulness of both sexes, their imperfect English and their frequent general ignorance, tend to show that British education has still leeway to make up before it can compare results with Germany and France.

Much that has been said above of the *Ecole Communale* applies to the *Lycée;* this institution is roughly equivalent to the Grammar School and to the Public school; it partakes rather of the nature of the former than of that of the latter, but its pupils number all those who would, in the ordinary course of things, go to a Public school. As regards fees, it is, however, easier to send a French boy to a *Lycée* than an English boy to a Public school; the cost of an English Public-school education is variously estimated: in the case of one school it ranges up to £400 a year. This seems exaggerated, but even half that sum, which I understand not to be an unusual figure, is enormous in comparison with the charge of the *Lycée.* There the fees vary slightly according to the age of the pupils, but they can be taken at about £70 per annum for boarders, £35 for half-boarders, who lunch in the school, and £18 for day boys; *Lycées* for girls are less numerous owing, up to the present, to the competition of Convents, but their fees are as a rule fairly low.

The pupils of the *Lycées* are therefore drawn from a very different class from that which fills the Public schools. The latter are practically preserved for the well-to-do, whilst in France low fees enable the son of the tradesman and the son of the President to study side by side; if I remember right, the first class I attended at the *Lycée Janson* numbered about thirty boys; some ten were the sons of men of business,[1] four

[1] Mostly of small means, agents, canvassers, managing clerks, etc.

or five of men of independent means, three of professional men, three of tradesmen, and one was the son of a *concierge;*[1] the rest belonging to the families of minor officials and clerks. This is a democratic combination which, though it prevails to a greater extent on the "modern" side than on the "classical," serves as an excellent preparation for the further levelling process practised in the army. It is therefore very difficult to compare the *Lycée* with the Public school; the latter supplies education (to the willing pupil), trains his character and his body, while the *Lycée* aims at forcing knowledge upon every boy. Education at a *Lycée* does not by any means represent in France the asset which a Public-school education is in Great Britain; the *Lycées* as State institutions of recent date have no traditions; the masters are appointed by the Government, and are not allowed to depart from the curriculum any more than the head-master is allowed originality in his administration. If a tradition grows up, such as that of games, it is due to fortuitous circumstances, and is not encouraged by the authorities. Roughly speaking, the difference amounts to this: that a man does not send his son to *Condorcet* or *Chaptal* for any definite reason, except that of convenience, because the selection will not affect his chances in life, whilst in Great Britain a boy's career is undoubtedly influenced by the school he was sent to.

The differences that exist between *Lycées* and Public schools are thus very elusive: owing to the fact that most of the boys are non-resident it is difficult for the headmaster to influence them and to give his school a particular tone. As he has no voice in the selection of

[1] This word cannot be translated; the position is roughly that of a hall porter in a block of flats.

the masters, there is no unity in the teaching staff, so that one form may have an able master on the Monday and a nonentity on the Tuesday; the headmaster, no doubt partly owing to this state of things, hardly ever makes an effort to influence the tone of the school and confines himself to representing the Executive with the discretion of an ambassador, including his self-effacement. French *Lycées* are intended to supply knowledge, not to form character; home education usually attends to the latter, though perhaps inadequately. A reaction has set in of late years, as the French have imbibed an immense respect for British systems: not content with the efficiency of their teachers, they are demanding a reversion to more natural methods, such as are practised in Great Britain, but this has not influenced the powers that be, and the schools are likely to remain unaltered unless the growing influence of athletics works an internal revolution.

From the *Lycée* to the University is a less natural step than would be the case in Great Britain. The French do not look upon the gaining of a University degree as the schoolboy's crowning task; this is due to the fact that most *Lycées* lead the student so far that he can enter special schools, such as those for Engineering, Forestry, the Army and Navy, etc., without going through a special university course. Indeed most University students have a definite object in view and usually intend to devote themselves to the law or to teaching; they do not look upon the university as a finishing school, but as a means of acquiring knowledge.

Thus a very clear difference exists between the older British university and even so venerable an institution as *La Sorbonne*, but it is far easier for an Englishman to

understand it than it is for him to appreciate the distinction between *Lycées* and Public schools, because he has similar instances in his own country. The French Colleges are in a position somewhat similar to that of London University, or of the Scotch universities as compared with Oxford and Cambridge.

If we regard Oxford and Cambridge as types of British Universities, the main distinction is that there are in France no residential colleges and that the all-powerful influence of intellectual fellowship is absent. I am aware that this privilege is not always made full use of by the young men who frequent the English universities, and that a very large section look upon the obtaining of a "blue" as being more important than that of a degree, but it is certain that many benefit to an extraordinary extent from this peculiar opportunity of culture. Strictly speaking, no institution can be an ideal university unless it be residential; any other may be anything between a glorified polytechnic and a learned pedagogic faculty, but it can only hope to impart knowledge and can hardly aspire to influence character deeply: if this point of view be not adopted by the reader, he will no doubt look upon the residential universities as not one whit more valuable than those whose students are scattered. The extraordinary advantage of the residential college lies in the fact that men whose minds are developing more or less on the same lines, owing to their being taught by the same masters, are thrown into continuous contact with one another, in classroom as in playing field, and that the intellectual conflict of their diverse natures brings out the more serious side of their character. That is in great part where the French universities fail; their graduates are often learned and

full of intellectual promise, but they usually lack the culture that proceeds from association with culture.

The French universities have as an object the imparting of as much knowledge as may be required by the workers, but there their action stops. As soon as the student leaves the lecture hall he is free to return to the niche he has constituted for himself, to its probable triviality and possible grossness, or to the vulgar pleasures of the town. His character does not come within the purview of the authorities; they do not seek to influence it any more than does the headmaster of a *Lycée.* Indeed it is not too much to say that there is in France no training of character, a fact which may account for the strongly developed individualism of the people, their unruliness and inability to combine. Above all, as regards the universities, they lose the advantage of that peculiar monastic, thoughtful life which is offered the young Englishman ; again, let us remember that a number of undergraduates are unconscious of the boon that is theirs, that they flout it by devoting themselves exclusively to sports and living in modish luxury. But, even if these were the larger number, which is not the case, the collegiate influence upon the minority would still be of great national importance ; whoever passes through the peaceful quadrangle of All Souls or looks upon the grim beauty of Brasenose will, if he have imagination, realise in a flash what such surroundings may mean to a mind in course of formation.

This is not a panegyric of the older English universities, a task which is best undertaken by their own alumni, but emphasis must be laid on these points if we wish to understand how different is the French university *régime.* Whereas Oxford and Cambridge produce

every year a little band of united minds, capable of exercising an influence, of spreading a tradition of culture and intellectual beauty, Paris and its compeers bring forward a host of highly-taught young men, many of them devoid of culture, often ignorant of the elements of taste, learned but undisciplined, ambitious but without common aims, separate units, not parts of a great whole.

For all these reasons, Frenchmen who have studied the system in vogue at English universities have imbibed as lively an admiration for Oxford and Cambridge as for the British Public schools. Members of an imaginative race, they intuitively understand what miracles such an atmosphere can work and they honestly deplore the poverty of ideals from which their own institutions suffer. They even enviously praise the over-development of sports in certain university circles, carried away by the reaction against the effeminate student of older France; the movement in favour of open-air life that is now gaining ground in every direction in France, has its roots in Great Britain, so that from this point of view the Englishman can do no wrong.

It is of course practically out of the question to establish a French university on English lines; enthusiasm and treasure might be showered upon such an institution but they would only endow it with the first laboratory or the greatest library in the world: they could not buy it traditions; they could not mellow its colours, deepen its turf or muffle with the touch of ages the sound of its bells. The university factor is absent in France; talent is individual and vigorous, but it is a phenomenon, not the natural fruit of a system. French talent is meteoric, not effulgent; it gains in intensity

what it loses in profundity and is a manifestation of such a nature that we can hardly compare it with that produced by British minds.

Leaving the consideration of the Universities and the *Ecoles Communales*, both of which institutions are in themselves unable to do more than impart facts, let us bring out a few points with regard to the *Lycées* which, as many of their pupils are resident, can be more fairly compared with English schools. The *Lycées*, moreover, represent the middle classes, with a sprinkling of working-class elements on a low property basis; thus their teaching stands for that of a very large portion of the people, of that portion which under the present social system generally produces teachers and leaders. The essential differences between *Lycées* and Public schools have already been brought out, but there are aspects peculiar to the French system which are well worth considering as they shed some light upon national characteristics.

The most noticeable point is no doubt that the French boy is overworked; the *Lycée* being intended to enable him to obtain, at the early age of seventeen or eighteen, a degree about equivalent to that of a Bachelor of Arts or of Science, he is compelled to absorb an enormous mass of knowledge which he may or may not assimilate. The curriculum is exceedingly heavy and is prepared and revised by a departmental council under the auspices of the Minister of Education; details given further on of the instruction given to boys not sixteen years old will show how varied is its nature and how extensive its scope. As a result, the French boy is expected to spend on five days a week four hours a day in the classroom, and on one day two hours;

from the age of fourteen upwards this is increased by two hours a week, so that, at this not very advanced age, the pupil is under direct tuition for twenty-four hours a week. These twenty-four hours are well filled, as most of the lessons are dictated and individual questions are continual; these are solid working hours. But the boy is not free as soon as he leaves the classroom, for lessons must be learned, poetry and prose committed to memory and other home work prepared. A boy of average intelligence cannot hope to satisfy his masters unless he devote at least two hours and often four to this part of his work, every day in the week. We thus arrive at as much as an eight hours' day, a preposterous total for a boy of fourteen, not only because his faculties are overtaxed but because such labour leaves hardly any time for exercise.

I can vouch for the fact that, some years ago, even at the most athletic school in France, the *Lycée Janson*, the boys could not hope for more than one hour's exercise a day and that even of the most unsatisfactory kind, games in the playground being practically unknown. Holidays do not solve the difficulty, for they only amount to a week at the end of the year, eleven or twelve days at Easter and two months in the summer. It will be easily understood how necessary the masters find it to press their pupils to the utmost, when we consider the subjects that the French boy is supposed to master when still in his teens and the methods that are used. A distinction must be established between the "classical" and the "modern" sides, which exist in all Paris *Lycées* and in all the important provincial ones; features of the first are of course Greek and Latin, to which from ten to fourteen hours a week are

devoted, with even less success than in Great Britain; unusual as it may be to meet with an Englishman between twenty and thirty who can construe anything but a common quotation, in France the educated man who quotes or who can translate Latin is still more rare. The practical French mind no longer favours the study of the Classics; indeed the dead languages are in France dead in the true sense. Whether Latin and Greek are useful in themselves as a training for the memory or valuable in some obscure philological direction I will not attempt to decide, but the fact remains that the Classics play no great part in the intellectual development of France. As a result, the "modern" side has, during the last ten years, gained considerably in public esteem and in many colleges its pupils considerably outnumber those who cling to the older system; the odium that still attaches to this teaching in English public schools, thanks to a form of rather priggish conservatism, is unknown in France where there is always a leaning towards the new order when it is opposed to the old. If we note, therefore, that boys on the "classical" side devote the remainder of their time to their own language and to the elements of history and geography, we need say no more, as this part of their curriculum is practically identical with that of the "modern" side.

On the modern side, we are confronted with a different system; there is nothing commercial about it and it aims consistently at developing imagination and culture. The object of this teaching is to fit the boy, by a direct and rapid process, for either commerce or industry or to prepare him fully for professional work; in addition, it aims at giving him wide general

knowledge. The system logically includes intensive cultivation of the boy's memory; if his mind is to absorb a large quantity of information it becomes essential to develop his mental muscles. To this effect poetry and especially prose are committed to memory at least three times a week, in addition to which, every three months, competitions are instituted when the boy is expected to memorise several hundreds of lines of poetry and, a more difficult task, some four or five pages of prose; if the reader have any doubts as to the work entailed by this system when the authors selected are Voltaire or Montesquieu, let him commit to memory say six hundred words (about two average pages) of Addison or Herbert Spencer. As a result of this peculiar feature, the memory is strengthened to such an extent that it retains information to an extraordinary degree; it is not unusual for a young Frenchman to remember word for word long passages learned by rote some ten years before.

That is training in the same sense as Greek and Latin, but it entails less labour and above all absorbs less time. How brilliantly effective it must be will be realised when the following curriculum has been considered. The energies of the modern side are brought to bear principally on Science in general, on the study of French and modern languages and on that of History. As regards Science, the teaching is thorough and usually absorbs about eight hours a week; mathematics are of course included up to the integral and differential calculus. These advanced studies are rather the exception, but it must be noted that, at the age of sixteen, the pupil has finished with the geometry of solids, has begun trigonometry and the study of

theories as to solids engendered by the revolution of planes; algebra has of course led him to a similarly advanced stage. These details are quoted so as to show how far the French boy is brought at an early age; to give a fuller account of the mathematical curriculum would be unnecessary but, before leaving aside the teaching of science, it should be mentioned that, at the same age, chemistry has been mastered up to organics and physics up to and including a fair knowledge of electricity. Laboratory work is not usual, but experiments are numerous as the State provides lavishly for this form of education.

Coupled with the attention given to scientific training is a great deal of teaching that tends to develop the faculty of language and the appreciation of the beautiful. The study of modern foreign languages is extensively pursued, as the French have of late years looked upon this part of a boy's education as being all-important. In this connection *Lycées* suffer, however, from the fact that foreign teachers cannot be employed by the State; thus the teaching is usually very inefficient, and a fair knowledge of foreign languages could not be claimed for the French boy any more than for the young Englishman, were it not for the keenness of parents in this direction; coaching prevails to an extraordinary extent, and the boy is thrown into continual contact with foreign domestics, so that his progress as regards modern languages is traceable to home conditions. Thus the study of foreign languages is progressing fast among the middle classes, but not entirely thanks to the *Lycées*.

If we look upon the foregoing studies as partaking of exact science, we find that History and French are the chosen mediums of culture. As regards the former,

its development is peculiar; not only does it embrace the history of France up to 1870 (an important point if we remember that we are dealing with schools and not with universities), but it also comprises the study of foreign history. Thus, at the age of sixteen, the French youth has amassed some knowledge, not only of the "battles and dates" of the history of his own country, but he has been told of the formation of the United States and given an idea of their Constitution; he has studied certain aspects of British history, knows the origins of the Austrian and German Empires and something of the history of the Popes; such obscure conflicts as those between Charles XII and Peter the Great or the vicissitudes of Holland are not foreign to him. No nation of Europe entirely escapes the attention of the French teacher, even when it has never come into contact with France, either in peace or war. Thus there is never an absolute blank in the Frenchman's mind when he is confronted with the question of the Balkans or of Poland; there is in his brain a substratum of knowledge on which intelligent newspaper reading can erect a solid edifice.

The value of a knowledge of History cannot be overestimated; there are probably no more potent means of broadening human sympathies than the study of the fortunes and great deeds of other races. Nothing tends more towards a peaceable attitude than a thorough grasp of the fact that other nations have lived through great wars and succeeded on land and sea, even at the expense of Great Britain; Fontenoy is a healthy corrective for Trafalgar and Saratoga for Waterloo. The splendour of a Charles-Quint, the valour of a Gustavus Adolphus, the subtlety of a Cavour should never be

forgotten when we ponder over the greatness of a Cromwell or a Wellington.

True, in the French *Lycée*, such knowledge can be imparted only superficially, but at least the seed is sown and, even did it never grow, it is a healthy element in one who is to be a citizen of the world. The study of foreign history brings the pupil into contact with civilisations other than his own and tinges his inborn jingoism with healthy respect for other races. However, we must not conclude that the manufacture of "Little Francers" is the dominating characteristic of *Lycée* teaching; the study of the French language and of its literature occupies perhaps the most important place in the curriculum. French authors are read and analysed several times a week, but this feature is not confined to France, so it need only be mentioned in passing; a notable fact is that the authorities lay stress on the study of Greek and Latin authors, of which there are excellent translations. This is probably unique; the "modern" side devotes no time to the study of the originals, but the framers of the curriculum do not think it advisable to leave their pupils in total ignorance of the great dead. They look upon the Greek and Roman traditions as a potent medium of culture, as a school of refinement and taste; thus we find among the books that are read and analysed all the works of Homer and Virgil, most of Herodotus, Livy, Aristophanes, Plautus, Plutarch's Lives, etc. As a result, the teaching of ancient history (which is included) is supplemented by incidental references, and the world of antiquity is revealed in a familiar tongue, instead of being hedged in by the study of syntax and everlasting construing.

Here it is interesting to note that the "modern" side is not excluded from the influence of the past, a very beneficial factor as regards intellectual development. The boy being thus equipped and his vocabulary much enriched, his energies are concentrated upon composition. The French are a fluent race and they love spoken and written eloquence to the point of verbosity, so they foster it in the boy by training him to express thought, by forcing him to produce it. To this end compositions are written at least twice a week, sometimes thrice; the most varied subjects are chosen, so as to ensure elasticity, and range from narrative to short theses on literary subjects. Even the rules of versification are taught, and the pupils made to produce a given number of verses on set subjects. This does not result in the calamitous creation of a generation of poets, but it is a characteristic instance of how thorough French training is and to what imaginative flights it soars.

As a result the Frenchman is generally fluent in his own language, often ingenious and literary in his writings and possessed more often than not of an extensive vocabulary; he rarely shrinks from using the latter in cases where the Englishman would abstain from doing so for fear of being dubbed a pedant. The authorities look upon an adequate knowledge of the French language and literature as all-important and do not relegate these subjects to obscurity, as is too often the case in British schools. Briefly, the *Lycée* does the work that is here undertaken by universities, with this notable difference that, as only a small percentage of British students attend the higher course, the great majority of the French middle class is far better taught than their British equals. National characteristics and

study in more mature years may redress the balance, but the fact remains that, on leaving school, the young Frenchman possesses a far better equipment of information than is provided by the average British institution.

The education of the middle-class boy is facilitated in France by family conditions which make the home circle a powerful influence. I understand that, in Great Britain, the day boy is the exception and that he is usually flouted by his fellow-students; this may result from his being a resident in the small town or village where the public school is located, in which case he will probably belong to a class looked upon by the boarders as inferior to that from which they spring. Middle-class families appear to think it essential or preferable that their sons should be boarders rather than attend daily courses, and to such an extreme does this go that boys are to be found in southern public schools whose parents live in the neighbourhood of great northern institutions and vice versa. This is probably accounted for by the fact that the repute of certain schools is in itself such an asset that a judicious selection has a value, which is not the case in French government schools.

In France, particularly in Paris, this state of things does not prevail. In most schools the boarders are, for various excellent reasons, less numerous than are the day boys. There are no athletics to induce parents to transfer the care of their sons to the school authorities, none at least to which the day boy has not equal access; in fact, it is far easier for the latter to develop his muscles than it is for the boarder, as that unfortunate boy, when the day's work is done, has nothing better at his disposal than a small playground; even the gymnasium is

not always open. The day boy is usually free at four o'clock, and so has a chance of spending three or four hours in games, should preparation allow of it ; thus his position is far better than that of the boarder.

We cannot, however, trace the prevalence of the day system to this particular reason, as French families have not yet fully realised the value of games ; one of the chief grounds for the practice is that government schools are not usually located in the country, but in the heart of great towns. As there is no advantage in sending the boy to one school rather than to another, he naturally attends a neighbouring one, where it would of course be ridiculous for him to be a boarder. The tender French mother (and she is usually tender to the point of making the boy effeminate) sees no reason why she should deprive herself of the society of her son, probably her only son, if not her only child, and of caring for his bodily and mental needs ; she therefore makes her son a day boy, an arrangement to which the father agrees with pleasure. If the French schools were equal to the British ones in the matter of training character, this would be an evil, but in the present state of things, the boy loses nothing by only attending daily classes. In the first place, should his parents be at all well-to-do, he can be coached at home by private teachers, of whom he often has two ; I have known a case where a boy of fourteen, in addition to his ordinary school work, was being educated by four masters who respectively gave him lessons in German, Mathematics, Drawing and general subjects. Moreover, he comes into contact with foreign servants and governesses and, as a result, his work is much more carefully and intelligently done ; at any rate the mother usually

superintends his work and natural laziness is soon discouraged.

The position of the boarder is painful when we contrast it with that of the day boy; he does not necessarily suffer from overwork, but his years at school are practically years in gaol. The military and bureaucratic system of France is rigidly applied to him; he is roused by the sound of a drum, and wears a uniform as ugly and dilapidated as that of the French trooper. Day and night he is under the eye of the professor or of the usher, and cannot hope for a moment of privacy; there is no question of the wide "bounds" in which English schoolboys are confined: located as French schools are in great cities, it is impossible to allow the boys to leave the school precincts, so that, if a boy be unruly or lazy, he very possibly may not, for a fortnight or more, leave the school buildings. His only resource is the playground, of which he soon sickens and where he lounges listlessly between classes; he only escapes on Thursday afternoons and on Sundays, provided that his behaviour has been satisfactory during the week. Formerly the boys were marshalled in a body and gravely led by ushers, in military order, for a walk through the streets, a pitiful sight; nowadays this arrangement is not so prevalent, and they are usually allowed to disport themselves in an open space where they play feeble games. On Sundays boarders usually join their families or friends, so that their sum total of real exercise is about two hours a week.

This is a terrible state of things, and it is not extraordinary that the present generation of middle-aged Frenchmen should be pale, obese and weakly; the French boarding system is a crime against nature and,

of late years, a strong reaction has set in, without, however, affecting it much. Until schools are built in the country, as they are in Great Britain, there will be no hope of mental and physical health for their unfortunate pupils.

Among the day boys, however, the fresh-air movement has set in with a vengeance and gains momentum every day. Clubs of all sorts have been and are being formed; tennis and cycling are easily the most popular forms of sport among the boys; running, football, cricket and hockey are also making immense headway, as is shown by the improving quality of the French teams that come over to play in this country. The French mother, again a fatal influence in this respect, is still to the fore with her fears for the life and limbs of her darling; she still shrinks from the idea that her son may risk a cold or a touch of the sun, but she is being carried away by the movement, and is now often as proud of a challenge cup as of a stack of prizes.

As the day boys probably outnumber the boarders, a large proportion of French youth is thus being influenced in a race-saving direction; for many years Great Britain has been fashionable, and in no way more than in sports. The French do not yet take very naturally to athletics; the love of them is an acquired taste of which the possessors are very conscious and rather proud, so that team games are still a weak point. The Frenchman often excels in individual sports, such as fencing, shooting, running, sculling, etc., but his faculty of combination is poor, so that French football, rowing and cricket teams are still weak; yet they are improving considerably, and it is certain that the next twenty or thirty years will see further im-

provement in the national physique, which has already benefited considerably from compulsory military training.

The valuable influence of games is partly traceable to the participation in them of the masters; this custom does not prevail in France, where professors are usually unfit for anything more than a constitutional and are too keenly penetrated by the consciousness of their importance as officials to unbend to such an extent. Their influence in the school suffers from this fact, but this they hardly realise as they never attempt to form character, but confine themselves to teaching. There is no such thing in France as mental training; a boy may be dirty or a liar and will be punished for his misdeeds, but he will not be pilloried before his fellows as he would be in Great Britain. There is no reformative action; rules are applied as is the Law, justly enough but rigidly. This is obviously a vicious system, as the object of the Law is, as yet, to restrain the evildoer, whilst that of school regulations should be to reform him.

It follows that such offences as the above do not awake the reprobation that they arouse in British schools; public opinion among boys takes its tone from the master, so that in French schools no boy is disgraced if he lie in self-defence. Should he tell the truth he may not be believed and may have to prove his statements, when he may be punished unjustly if the evidence he adduces be insufficient. It is very unusual for a master to "put a boy on his honour"; he will rather apply to him the cross-examining methods of a prosecuting counsel, in response to which the boy naturally develops an appalling degree of mendacious ingenuity. Moreover, in his thirst for a conviction, the master will often

stoop to tolerating delation; the sneak is hated in France as in Great Britain, but whereas in this country he would be thrashed by the boys at once and by the master at the next opportunity, in France he will often find favour in the eyes of the master whose tool he is.

It should not be concluded that these rather luridly painted evils prevail in all French schools; the tone has improved of late years, probably thanks to the increasing influence of games, but there is still a great deal of scope for reform. Submission to the umpire (which is far from being as general as in this country), fair play as against sharp practice, and generally improved health are working wonders with the French character and will in time profoundly modify the school system; complete reform cannot, however, be hoped for until the schools are removed to the country, a consummation not yet in sight.

To sum up, it will suffice to emphasise the fact that French schools are only partly schools; they teach the boy as much as he needs and more, but they do not train his character any more than they develop his body. Natural evolution is slowly doing this portion of their work, and it is within the bounds of possibility that they may eventually follow the movement and live up to their full purpose of teaching the boy the art of complete living by developing to the fullest, not only his brain, but also his soul and his body.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DRAMA

IT may, at first sight, appear singular that an entire chapter should be devoted to the influence of the drama; this very fact shows the necessity for it, as such an impression is exactly illustrative of the British attitude towards the Stage. We do not take it seriously and yet it is essentially earnest, replete with possibilities and capable of exercising considerable influence on men and their actions.

We must, of course, admit that there is drama and drama and that there exists an impassable gulf between, say Ibsen, and the various "Girls" by whom we are faced regularly every season. We must begin with definitions and make up our minds, either that the theatre is intended to depict life or that its powers must be exclusively devoted to the entertaining of our eyes and ears. Entertainments based on unreality, however pleasant they may be, are not drama in the true sense, any more than impossible colour or impossible lines can hope to produce a work of art.

True drama is the photographic and phonographic expression of possible, preferably of probable, events; either it must be absolutely faithful to reality and leave the spectator to draw his own conclusions or it must expound a theory from which, by means of the conflict

of characters, the playwright causes a lesson to emerge. Of the first class are the plays of Aristophanes, of Plautus, of Molière, while to the second belong such plays as those of Brieux and Bernard Shaw.

At the present time, the drama is, on the Continent of Europe, a powerful force because the people look upon it, not only as a means of employing their leisure, but as an educational and an ethical medium. No theory is too wild, no proposal too far-fetched to be refused a hearing if the play be interesting and its construction and plot true to life; the acting attains, as a rule, so high a pitch of excellence that even an inferior play becomes acceptable whilst a great drama at once makes a very forcible appeal to the mind. Thus the Stage is not only a means of entertainment but it is the rostrum where views are aired, theories discussed and movements born; as in the days of the Greeks it is a political platform and a pulpit from which the sternest lessons are as favourably received as are the most merry triflings. In Russia, in Germany, Austria, Sweden, to name but the chief countries besides France, the names of Gorki, Tolstoi, Suderman, Hauptmann, Björnson, at once conjure up daring plays which lay bare the horror of social conditions, the sufferings of the oppressed, the blind strivings of the soul enmeshed in the toils of passion, the struggles of the individual with Fate, with his own desires, or with those of his fellows.

A foreign play usually stimulates thought in the spectator and induces him to examine his life and search his own being; it makes known to him the evil of the world, and presents him with schemes for its reformation. It "agitates ideas," to translate literally

a terse French saying. Such is notoriously not the case in Great Britain, where the attitude of the playgoer is above all the manifestation of a desire to escape from life; whether this be traceable to a somewhat maligned climate, which causes the worker to sigh for gaiety at the expense of truth, to innate frivolity or to sheer laziness of mind, I do not profess to say, but the fact remains that the British drama, taken as a whole, cannot compare in intellectual value with that of the principal European nations.

A section of the critics is well aware of this; such men as Mr. J. T. Grein and Mr. Max Beerbohm have long twanged the lyre dolorous, without appreciably influencing the all-conquering actor-manager. The British drama has fallen into the hands of American trusts and actors with a taste for business, who wage energetic war over its prostrate body. Once degraded to the level of purely business enterprise, the drama has gone from bad to worse; keen competition, on the one hand, has resulted in too many theatres being built, and, on the other hand, the large interests that back them have found it advantageous to expend enormous sums on advertising and staging, irrespective of the value of the plays which they produce. Thus, the public has been spoiled; it has been led to expect magnificent costumes and scenery and taught to content itself with these; public taste has been depraved and its attention distracted from the drama itself; it has forgotten that "the play's the thing" and has learned to appreciate a husk that has lost its kernel.

The actor-manager is equally to blame; not only is his chief object to make money, but his love of picture post-card notoriety tends to make him produce plays

of which he can appropriate all the "fat," assisted as he is by utterly incompetent companies. The British playgoer no longer asks: Have you been to this play? but: Have you "been" to Lewis Waller or George Alexander or Tree? as the case may be. Indeed it does not need a very great stretch of the imagination to liken popular drama to the music-hall "turn," the merit of which exists only thanks to the ability of the performer.

It may be said that managers and syndicates give the public what it demands and that they are not to blame because popular taste is low or corrupt, but the public accepts in the main that which is offered to it, and nowhere does it more submissively bow to the dicta of its favourites than it does in this country. By establishing a low intellectual standard a low class of playgoer is attracted in shoals, and, by dint of numbers, it influences the management; this statement may appear to contradict the previous one, but both are true and operate simultaneously: the lower the standard, the lower is the class from which patrons are drawn, and the more inferior the patrons, the more inferior the standard of plays becomes. As a natural result, vulgarity and puerility are on the increase, arrested occasionally by a reaction or emphasised by such brilliant exceptions as those which we shall notice further on.

The musical comedy has so often been the butt of the conscientious critic that one hesitates to slay the slain; it is usually neither musical nor a comedy, but a hotchpotch of inconsequence intermingled with tunes that emerge from past musical comedies with the regularity of a recurring decimal. Such, with gorgeous plays selected mainly with a view to their scenic possi-

bilities, is the usual fare of the playgoer, who thus becomes unfitted for the least serious of serious plays.

With the exception of Shakespeare, and the exception is due mainly to the business ability of Mr. Beerbohm Tree, serious plays are impossible in London, as regards the general public. The latter does not want to go to the theatre to be lectured nor does it want to think; in fact its dominant desire appears to be for protection against the slightest intellectual exertion. Provided the actors be popular and the plot based on action only and not on theories, the play will be successful; moral, social or political issues so effectually damn a play that a leading manager will hardly stage it. There is little sign of a reaction. The Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker[1] have produced, during the last few years, a group of plays exceeding in intellectual value the output of several decades, but their success has been only partial. The "Court" has, of course, attracted the Intellectuals and the cranks who invariably follow in their train: it has also touched the fringe of "Society" and has become fashionable, but I doubt whether the general public has been involved in the movement. In a broader form "The Court" has only extended the traditions of the Stage Society, the Pioneers, the Elizabethan Stage Society, etc., and it is not likely to exert very much influence upon our national attitude.

We might well, after this disquisition, dismiss the French Stage with the remark that we have only to contradict all that has just been said, and that then its characteristics will be at once understood. Of course, not all plays produced in France are serious; far from

[1] At the Court Theatre and at the Savoy Theatre.

it! Every day comedies and farces are produced, which are broadly humorous, satirical or semi-serious. Their authors have no axe to grind, and they are roughly comparable with the comedies of Oscar Wilde, Pinero or Captain Marshall; we must make allowances for the somewhat laxer tendencies of the French and the benevolence of the authorities who tolerate the depiction of a moral standard undreamt of here. With these plays we are not concerned, as their object is purely to entertain and they are common to both countries; the difference appears when we consider the serious plays that are so successful in France.

Serious plays, in France, naturally fall into three classes: political, social and moral. Political plays are every day more frequent, and are usually written in a bitter partisan spirit; occasionally a wit pokes elaborate and pungent fun at the political machine itself but, as a rule, one party is pilloried and another glorified. Such questions as the hypocrisy of the Socialists, the selfishness of the *bourgeois* parties and the mock heroics of Orleanism are popular topics and attract large audiences; as a result, interest in politics is quickened, and public opinion is educated, if the playgoers be sufficiently eclectic. It is by no means unusual to see the stage turned into impromptu hustings for an entire act, while the plot is thrust into the background and opinions ventilated and sometimes so violently attacked and defended as to draw the audience into conflict. It may be argued that this is hardly drama, but that no realist will admit, for all things that are true and worth seeing are well worthy of the stage.

It is impossible to quote many plays in this chapter, but some titles and a short account of a few plays will

show to what extent the political interest succeeds in drawing and retaining large audiences. For instance, *La Vie Publique*[1] explains itself; it reveals with pitiless truthfulness and accuracy to what extent a desire for political power and renown may deprave the man who is its victim. *La Vie Publique* shows us the would-be politician ready to promise the impossible, to lie, to deceive without a moment's thought; above all it demonstrates how even the honest man is drawn into the net and unconsciously gives way to the nefarious influence of his craving for office, to which he is at last ready to sacrifice his honour, his most elementary principles, his own happiness and that of those who once were dear to him. It is a cruel satire, but it contributes powerfully to open the eyes of the public and to put it on its guard against enthusiasm in a poor cause.

La Vie Publique is a general attack, but most political plays aim at a particular party; their production has been, of late years, powerfully stimulated by the Dreyfus case and its developments. A notable example is *Le Retour de Jérusalem*,[2] which shows us a daughter of the Jewish race at first attempting to abandon her people, evolving towards Christianity, merging herself in the Catholic world of the French aristocracy and upper middle class; cunningly, then, heredity and some incomprehensible racial force draws her back and casts her back into the arms of her own race, devoid of patriotic feeling, alone and wandering for ever. Painful as is such a tale of a struggling personality, it puts in a nutshell the Jewish problem, perpetual and perhaps insoluble; it shows how difficult, perhaps impossible, it

[1] Public Life. [2] The Return from Jerusalem.

is for the Christian world to assimilate the Jews, so long as they remain in proud isolation, intermarrying among themselves and constituting a nation in a nation, wherever they may be born.

Another notable play should be mentioned, more especially because it is an answer to *Le Retour de Jérusalem* and thus demonstrates to what extent the stage has become a platform for the reading of political tracts. *Décadence* shows us the Reactionary Catholic nobility, slowly losing ground in the country, its ambitions becoming puny and impoverished, its name sold to shady financiers and its children to Jewish parvenus. Painful and unpleasant? No doubt, but the indictment is true and therefore worthy of being proclaimed for all men to hear.

The political influence of the Stage is perhaps greater than that of literature; not only does a successful play reach a hundred thousand minds for a book's few thousands, but it presents the case more vividly and, where the printed page would fail, convinces with a gesture. This accounts for the success of such plays as *La Guerre au Village*,[1] where religious persecution of the freethinker is shown in its most acute form; *Ces Messieurs*,[2] in which something is revealed of the political manœuvring of prelacy, of its meannesses and its immorality, and that in highly coloured pictures; *Biribi*,[3] in which we are invited to witness the horrors of a military penal colony. All these subjects are painful and, in England, would never be put on the stage; can it be denied that we are missing great opportunities of "agitating ideas"

[1] War in the Village. [2] These Gentlemen!

[3] A slang name for the African corps in which felons and incorrigibles are interned.

and that the sores of our social system would be more easy to heal if the crude glare of the footlights were to illumine them?

That nothing is too cruel or too repulsive to be represented is demonstrated by the success of the social and moral plays which, even more than those dealing with political subjects, are favoured by French playwrights. They almost invariably contain a thesis which the author defends; he weaves a clever plot and embodies in it the vicious social conditions, for which he sometimes suggests a remedy, but which he more often leaves to ferment in the mind of his hearers so that personal opinion may do its work. These plays usually deal with the relations of the individual or of certain classes to Society, and develop pitilessly the effects of laws and customs on the happiness of the people. These plays are so numerous that one despairs of giving an idea of their scope; foremost stand the achievements of Brieux, the most incisive and profound of living French playwrights. In *Maternité*,[1] he shows us the individual struggling with Life to provide for his progeny, crushed under the burden, faced by the hypocrisy of the State that urges him to rear a family and presses upon him ever more ruthlessly as he obeys its commands; in *La Robe Rouge*,[2] Brieux gives us an insight into the iniquity of secret legal proceedings; in *Les Remplaçantes*,[3] into the frivolity and selfishness of modern mothers, the dangers that they cause their children to run at the hands of hired wet-nurses, their brutal indifference to the fate of the offspring of the latter; in *Les Avariés*,[4] he does not even shrink from showing us

[1] Maternity. [2] The Red Robe (The Arm of the Law).
[3] Substitutes. [4] Tainted.

the peril of over-tolerant laws, which allow those afflicted with the worst scourge known to medicine to marry and hand on the curse.

Of all these things we sometimes talk covertly, but we refuse to face the evil openly, so that public opinion remains half ignorant and careless and reform is indefinitely delayed. Does not the French attitude in this respect make for honesty and courage? All subjects are within the purview of the French playwright. In *Retour des Courses*,[1] we are shown the social results of the betting evil; in *L'Armature*,[2] the dominating power of money; in *Les Ventres Dorés*,[3] the ugliness and shadiness of Stock Exchange traffic; in *Les Tenailles*,[4] the iniquity of divorce laws which unduly favour one sex.

Thus social evils are laid bare and, from the stage, with far more force than from the most famous pulpits, comes the cry: Cure! Cure! To waste the stage is to waste a force; I do not say that we should go to dramatists for the solution of social evils, but we should go to them to hear the sins of Society denounced, as we go to church to behold our own. It is good that we should see and have thrust upon us the evil conditions under which modern systems admittedly groan, for by those means only can public opinion be aroused. It is good that Hauptmann should show us in *Die Weber*[5] the sufferings of the classes that Society treads down, for thus and thus only can be aroused in us the holy indignation and the lofty idealism that lie at the root of all reform, social, moral or political.

[1] Home from the Races (all the winners!).
[2] The Backbone.
[3] Roughly, "Guinea-pigs."
[4] Say, "The Shackles."
[5] The Weavers.

All this applies with equal force to plays dealing with moral subjects, if we distinguish between "social" as affecting classes or the cosmos and "moral" as concerning more directly the problems that confront the individual. This kind of play is more popular still than the two preceding classes. More often than not it is founded on the problems of marriage and of sex generally; there is no Censor in France, and the authorities are very broad-minded and permit the discussion of subjects and situations which would be tabooed in Great Britain. I do not profess to decide whether we are more squeamish than the French or simply more hypocritical, but would only say that intercourse with individuals seems to show that we are ignorant rather than indifferent in regard to these questions. The French have gone to the other extreme, and rather revel in analysis and sub-analysis of hypothetical situations concerned with marriage, irregular alliances and heredity; the tendency is somewhat morbid and its satisfaction does not appreciably make for the solution of personal difficulties, owing to their infinite variety.

"Moral" plays, however, give "furiously to think" and that, in itself, is not a negligible point; moreover, they have absorbed a great part of the energies of such well-known writers as, for example, Brieux, Mirbeau, Lavedan, etc., so that some of the best-known instances should also be quoted. *Les Affaires sont les Affaires*,[1] by Octave Mirbeau, depicts for our benefit the superman of affairs, ruthless and all-dominating, practically careless of personal honour, indifferent to family disaster, absorbed wholly by his money-making passion and above all by his lust for power. In *Blanchette*,

[1] Business is Business.

practically a "social" play, Brieux shows us the results of rising too rapidly from one's class; his heroine, the daughter of peasants, is artificially forced up by education, struggles for a living as a teacher and barely avoids the vice which, in a great city, is ever so ready to seize upon the poor and the lonely. In *Le Duel*,[1] a powerful play of which, no more than of *Les Affaires sont les Affaires* or *La Robe Rouge*, we should judge by translations "suited" to British audiences, Lavedan presents a painful situation; he compresses into four acts the poignant struggle that rages in the breast of the priest between his faith and the flesh, the everlasting conflict between mysticism and materialism. In *Les Hannetons*,[2] the perils of irregular unions, in *Paraître*,[3] the crushing weight of social pretension, are laid before us so powerfully that we cannot pretend to be blind.

It would be easy to quote innumerable instances of such plays, all dealing with different problems and with their endless variations; but enough has been said to show how firm a grasp the drama has on the lives of the French people. Before dismissing the subject, a few characteristic points must, however, be emphasised. One of the most remarkable is the advanced tendency of many social plays; they are nearly always Socialistic and depict everyday evils with the ever-underlying suggestion that Socialism would prove an effective cure. Thus the Stage has become in France one of the most effective means of propaganda for advanced schools of thought; the vigour and clarity of the French language have been enlisted in the cause, and it is easy to trace to this fact the spreading of Socialistic doctrine

[1] The Duel.
[2] The Cockchafers (the Incubus). [3] Keeping up Appearances.

among the wealthier classes. The *Intellectuels*, of whom mention has already been made, are, as a rule, keenly interested in matters dramatic and form the more enthusiastic section of Brieux and Mirbeau's audiences. Discontent with social conditions naturally drives the thinker into or towards the Socialist camp; by no more potent means than the drama can it be hoped to reach those who are not in daily contact with the vicious state of things which it reproduces vividly before their eyes.

From all this it is clear that French plays have yet another characteristic, viz. courage, and that to the point of rashness. The dramatist stops at nothing; he deals with problems so thoroughly that, if necessary, he enlists the support of science, anthropological or medical. Even before the suppression of the Censor, he had full latitude, and a serious play was rarely interdicted, *Les Avariés* being a notable exception. It is permissible to believe that, even if the Lord Chamberlain were deprived of his powers, British dramatists would not at the present time make use of their liberty to the utmost, in the face of public opinion. French dramatists know no such scruples; they are ready to lay bare for our inspection the most intimate scenes of private life and to discuss the thorniest problems that confront the individual. Such courage is worthy of admiration, for contempt of Mrs. Grundy, when it proceeds from earnestness, necessarily makes for bold and independent thinking, and without boldness and thoroughness nothing can be done.

It should be said that French drama has two important advantages, a literary language and excellent actors. It is a commonplace to remark that anything

may be said in French and not very much in English, but it rests on a basis of truth. A sentence which, in English, can only be described as coarse, can nearly always be translated into French that will not make the most sensitive wince; this is partly due to the fact that we are accustomed in our horror of pedantry to limit our vocabulary, whilst the educated classes in France never shrink from using long words; they do not allow their linguistic arsenal to rust, so that the large selection of words to which they are accustomed allows the dramatist to use the most suitable and to exercise a very wide choice. Moreover, there is a subtle quality in the French language, an indefinably refined and delicate something, which enables the writer to be forcible without being crude.

The quality of the acting is also an important factor; a play may be made or marred by acting and many are, in England, only saved from failure by the ability of a single actor or actress. In France, however, the art of acting is far more common than in Great Britain; in common with most Latin peoples, the race possesses histrionic ability, so that it is possible to form excellent companies, capable of giving its full value to every one of the playwright's thoughts. The French Stage does not, as yet, suffer from the evils of the actor-manager system, though several leading French actors and actresses, such as Gémier, Réjane and Sarah Bernhardt, have entered the ranks of management. The level of acting is still high and shows no sign of decadence; the official school, the *Conservatoire*, continues to train several hundreds of pupils every year, so that the French Stage is not flooded as it is in Great Britain with men who have found the Stock Exchange unremunerative and

young girls who sigh for emancipation from suburban dullness. The actor is also encouraged by short runs; a hundred nights being looked upon as excellent, he is enabled to create a greater number of parts; nothing is more numbing than the system which causes men to specialise, however excellent the results produced may be. In France, Mr. O. B. Clarence and Mr. Fisher White would not be everlastingly old nor Mr. Eric Lewis perpetually affable and dictatorial; they would be expected to display far more versatility and to impersonate not only a Romeo but a Caliban, a Napoleon or a Svengali.

Endowed with all these advantages, French drama should assuredly flourish and extend its scope; there are no signs that it is losing its popularity; indeed it is daily taking a firmer hold of the people and influencing their mental attitude. Not only does the need for relaxation grow daily as activity increases, but the Stage is admittedly becoming more and more an educational medium. Actors and actresses have not entirely cleared themselves of the stigma attached to them in the past by ecclesiastical authorities, but they are daily affirming their status, entering the ranks of the *Légion d'Honneur* and, a more difficult feat, "solid" French society, which must not be confounded with the "smart" section.

The only source of danger for the French Stage is the tendency displayed by certain writers of pseudo-serious plays to become too obviously pornographic; it is not desirable that anything should be hidden, however horrible, if the revelation is to be useful and to militate in favour of a cure, but it would be injurious for the prospects of French drama if science were to become the handmaid of prurient curiosity. In all matters that are

laid before the public it is always difficult to distinguish between scientific and morbid interest; individuals often conceal unhealthy instincts by affecting an interest in biology, a remark which is also applicable to audiences. The French Stage certainly sails very near the wind and sometimes goes too far, when it loses sight of utility and lays before us unsavoury stories the telling of which benefits no man.

However, if we consider French drama as a whole, we cannot but conclude that it is great in social potentialities. It has, to an extraordinary degree, quickened the interest of the people in social and political matters, and is every day contributing to the formation of vigorous public opinion. In Great Britain the popular mind is apparently more easily moved by literature (perhaps because there is no censor of books), which accounts for the influence attributed to works such as *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Song of the Shirt* or *No.* 5 *John Street;* in France, though literature is also a powerful force, the drama spreads a gospel of high ideals and assists the evolution of Society towards a better state, political, social and moral.

CHAPTER XV

THE FRENCH WOMAN

TO say that woman is a powerful influence in the State is surely a truism; her action is subtle and slow but it is none the less potent, perhaps even all the more so. Slowly she shapes to her point of view the family and sometimes the class, so that she indirectly modifies the attitude of the body politic on sex lines, which men are given to ignoring. I am aware that militant supporters of woman's suffrage contend that legislation does proceed on sex lines and that it is conducted for man's advantage; it is unnecessary to touch here upon the sinister designs that are thus attributed to the male sex, nor is it desirable to attempt to demonstrate either the necessity or the futility of legislating for the purpose of removing sex disabilities. Irrespective of the question of votes, woman has always exercised her power, particularly with regard to education, hours of labour and medical questions.

These remarks apply to women in all civilised countries, but their influence varies in degree and in nature according to national characteristics; thus, in Great Britain, their energies appear concerned rather with the displacement of a party for the benefit of another than with the prosecution of a particular reform. Setting aside the intellectual exceptions from among whom are

recruited some remarkably vigorous temperance reformers, anti-vivisectionists, Free-Traders, Protectionists, etc., we find the bulk utterly indifferent to politics and neglectful of the exercise of their influence. Such is also the case in France, where politics are voted dull by the majority of women, unless they belong to the disaffected sections and make a hobby of stillborn plots.

The political influence of women in France is therefore, in the aggregate, no more noteworthy than it is in Great Britain; indeed France cannot boast of such energetic organisations as the Primrose League, the Women's Free Trade Council, etc. There are no political hostesses whose receptions are regularly announced in the Press, no canvassers at elections, no women members on the boards of local authorities. Any influence that the French woman wields proceeds from her personal characteristics, which are very striking and mark her out at once from among women of all races. If there be such things as national peculiarities, they are certainly found in a very pronounced form in the French woman, and this goes very far towards explaining the esteem in which she is held.

It should not be forgotten, in the first instance, that the French woman must not be confounded with the *Parisienne* or with what is generally considered to be the *Parisienne*. I do not pretend that generalisation is justifiable even as regards the female inhabitants of Paris, but if we understand by *Parisienne* the type that is commonly described by the word, we find that she differs in notable respects from the typical French woman. Generally speaking it is always imprudent to judge the inhabitants of any country by those of the metropolis; Paris is no exception, and there exists

apparently as great a gap between its inhabitants and those of the rest of France as between those of London and of the provinces.

Paris, as a city of superficial luxury set in a land where pageantry is a tradition, has influenced the people of France and particularly the wealthier feminine section. Thus we have acquired the idea that the French woman is invariably immoral and that her ideals may be summed up in the art of perfect dressing. We must not be led away into accepting as representative types the specimens of the *gens chics*[1] who occasionally visit London or who may be seen by the casual tourist flaunting it in the Avenue des Acacias. To take this type of *Parisienne* as the representative of the French woman would be as unfair as to judge America by the "Newport Set" or England by the "Upper Ten."

The *Parisienne* of the over-dressed, tight-laced type, whose audacious millinery and high-pitched voice amaze the stolid Briton, is an exception and therefore thoroughly unimportant; our plays and our novels, whenever they have to do with her, contrive to harrow our feelings with the revelation of her dressmaker's bills and the details of her visits to Cythera, but it is doubtful whether she is one in a thousand and it is with the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine that we are concerned.

In France, more than in any other country, we must seek for general impressions among the middle classes, for this part of the community is proportionately more numerous than in other parts of Western Europe owing to the spread of education and comfort. It should be noted also that, among the working classes,

[1] The "smart set."

women are usually superior to their masculine associates. They are naturally more refined, and hardly ever give way to drink;[1] their general characteristics also tend to raise them still further.

If we accept the middle classes as that from which we must draw our conclusions, the charges of frivolity and immorality fall to the ground. M. Brieux has lately dealt with the latter question in a successful play, *La Française*, where, curiously enough, we are shown the discomfiture of an amorous Anglo-Saxon, a victim of hearsay and of hasty generalisation. This question is dealt with more fully in the chapter concerned with marriage in France, so that it will suffice to state here that it is difficult to conceive a more placidly virtuous type than the middle-class French wife. Indeed, if anything need be said on the subject, it is not impossible that the French attitude in this respect is stricter than that of other nations where the appearances of respectability are so successfully kept up.

As regards frivolity and the inordinate craving for fine clothes, which are supposed to be deeply implanted in every French woman, the *tu quoque* is not very difficult to establish. With respect to frivolity, a short stay in France will demonstrate that the desire for diversion is far less pronounced in all classes than it is in Great Britain, and that this applies to Paris as opposed to London. A more thoroughly stolid and stay-at-home class than the French *bourgeoisie* I cannot conceive; the theatre-going of the average London

[1] I can testify personally to this, as I can only recollect witnessing one case of drunkenness among women in France in a little under twenty years.—W. L. G.

girl in every month probably equals that of a similarly placed *Parisienne* for a year. Our impression that restaurant dining is a feature of French life, is another fallacy of which a short stay in France would soon dispose.

Extravagance in dress is of course the main accusation levelled at the French woman and that, in all likelihood, because she is nearly always better clothed at a smaller cost than her foreign sisters. Because she has achieved elegance she becomes the butt of nations and is readily charged with limiting her ambitions to the cut of her frocks; such an assault is a compliment, for it may be safely accepted that it demonstrates all the more clearly the French woman's success. She is endowed with natural elegance and a tendency to be neat under the most unfavourable circumstances: moreover she usually has to make up for her lack of facial beauty, and dress is her obvious resource. This accounts in great part for her fame in matters of fashion, and none but a Puritan would look upon that as an undesirable possession.

The national characteristics of the French woman are so distinctive and interesting that they must be reviewed in detail, after which we shall easily understand how she has attained her prominent position in French society and how unlikely it is that she will forfeit it. This being done, those very defects of frivolity and love of dress should be looked upon as good qualities, even if they were proved to prevail to the degree that is commonly accepted, for they show how well the French woman understands the art of complete living, combining as she does efficiency in practical matters and an intelligent appreciation of beauty and grace.

We may, for the sake of convenience, distinguish among women two types and adopt the Weininger classification of wife and mother. We are not concerned with the French woman as a personality but with her influence and attitude in the two principal rôles of woman; among French women we meet successful lawyers,[1] doctors, writers and merchants as we do in Great Britain, but they are exceptional in our present world system and cannot form the basis of a generalisation. It is the French wife and the French mother whom it is important to analyse and to understand if we wish to obtain a clear idea of woman's influence in France.

Generally speaking the French wife is conspicuous for her remarkable ability in household management; the German may be more hardworking and the English woman more original, but neither combines the essential qualities of thrift, frugality and intelligent sympathy, tempered by a due regard for elegance, which characterise the French woman. It is difficult to trace the origin of this efficiency, easy as it may be to define it as the unobtrusive attainment of comfort at a minimum cost. From a man's point of view good food is the principal object and, in this direction, the French woman appears to shine in every walk of life; the fame of French cooking has been spread by the French *chef*, but the standard set by the women of France is unequalled in other countries. The importance of this question must not be underrated, for well-prepared food does not only pander to a low form of sybaritism, but it has a direct bearing on the health of the family and thereby on its physical and mental development.

Among all classes this question of cookery is looked

[1] See p. 322.

upon as important; the well-to-do *bourgeoise* rarely disdains to enter her kitchen and even to take part in the preparation of food: she invariably keeps in very close contact with her servants, upon whom she does not obtrude her authority, and criticises severely the results of their efforts; this, of course, tends to a high standard, of which all classes reap the benefit. Making every allowance for natural genius, it is noteworthy that household matters are taught, particularly in the lower middle classes, and that the daughters of the family are grounded in all branches of the truest domestic economy.

In France women are usually confronted with small means and large demands for, as a rule, salaries and profits are not large; where the reverse is the case, the French tendency towards economy induces all classes to live well within their income.[1] Thus we find economy exemplified by the French housewife; in spite of the high price of foodstuffs and household requisites, she maintains a standard of comfort that is unknown among the corresponding classes in Great Britain. The fare is more pleasing and far more varied; it is far less heavy, which may account for the rarity of dyspepsia and for national cheerfulness; servants are more cleanly and so efficient that, as a rule, establishments are about half the British class equivalent. Indeed the servant problem is unknown in France, partly because there is no demand for large staffs, but mainly because their individual standard of efficiency is very high.

The immediate result of household economy might be personal extravagance, but here again we find the

[1] It is not unusual to find a French family saving 10 to 25 per cent of its annual income.

French woman the prime mover in family thrift. She fully shares her husband's ambition for "old age in a cottage," and steadily works towards that end. She is generally cautious and often controls the investment of savings, with which she usually purchases Government securities. The acquisition of interests in foreign ventures does not proceed from the women of France; they almost invariably confine themselves to French Government stocks or to municipal loans into which there enters a mild element of gambling.[1] To this sound if unprogressive policy, France owes to a great extent her extraordinary accumulation of wealth.

A perfect housekeeper is, however, not the perfect wife; the ideal wife may be an execrable mother: indeed it is permissible to suggest that the wife type and the mother type exclude one another. This often happens in France, but, generally speaking, the French woman gives her husband that essential pleasure without which marriage is a failure, sympathy with his work or his ambitions. It has often been said that French women run their husbands' businesses; this is perhaps exaggerated, though often true in the case of the shopkeeping classes, where the wife is usually cashier, accountant and shop assistant, but there is no doubt that Frenchmen confide to a notable extent in their wives and accept their advice in matters of business. The shrewdness and acquisitiveness of the French woman stand her in good stead and give her

[1] Premium Bonds. They are as a rule issued by Town Councils or by the *Crédit Foncier* (Land Bank), and pay between 2 and 4 per cent interest; all are redeemable at par, and some hundreds are drawn every year, carrying prizes varying between £40 and £4000; a few prizes reach £20,000.

upon her husband the powerful hold that goes with the control of the purse.

In other directions than in business this helpful tendency is apparent; the French woman wedded to a professional man or an artist is his most enthusiastic advertising agent; she will spare no efforts that he may attain his success: indeed, there are perhaps grounds for a traditional if somewhat coarse French pleasantry, concerning the wives of officials who depend for promotion on the good graces of a chief. To emphasise this piece of slander, which has been the subject of many scurrilous jests, is not desirable, but it illustrates very clearly the lengths to which the French conceive their ambitious wives might go.

It must not be inferred from the foregoing that I wish to prove that the French woman is the ideal type of wife. Comparison is unnecessary, though she probably contrasts favourably with the average British wife; she has, however, certain characteristics which would, in our opinion, militate against her. The French woman is dour and tends to become mercenary, a natural development of her qualities of thrift and frugality. The needs of the household and the demands of her taste for adornment being satisfied, the French woman is distinctly avaricious and influences to a noxious degree the expenditure of her household. She does not recognise sufficiently the need for relaxation; she is inclined to forgo pleasures that must be paid for and to interfere with the amusements of the masculine portion of the family.

As a natural result of a stay-at-home life, the French woman often becomes petty and narrow; small pleasures, small cares and small ambitions infallibly do their

work. She dwarfs her husband's outlook and it is partly to her that we can trace his lack of ambition, just as we can follow the weakening trend of her influence on her sons.

The imperfections of the French woman are perfectly normal, and it is hard to believe that she would not lose much of her value if she were devoid of them; she has "the defects of her qualities," as the French saying goes. The sum total of her faults and of her virtues leaves, however, a substantial balance in her favour. The foregoing remarks apply mainly to the *bourgeoisie.* They acquire more force when applied to the working classes; the middle-class British housewife is not separated from her French sister by obvious shortcomings, whereas a comparison of the working classes is at once striking and depressing.

It is notorious that the British workman's helpmeet is fast becoming more and more inefficient; she does not deserve the abuse showered upon her by classes that hate and despise her, but it is obvious to any who visit homes in the poorer districts that household economy is vanishing. The old Board schools were certainly a poor training ground for the daughters of the people, for too little attention was usually given to instruction in really necessary matters. Such an assertion as this will no doubt be met with the remark that a daughter of the people has as much right to learn the violin or to model in clay as the daughter of a peer; undoubtedly, but under the evil conditions of modern society, where education stops at too early an age, it is more essential that the future wife of the working man should learn how to cook, to sew and to rear children: as conditions alter, the standards may well be raised.

In France the workman's daughter is grounded in the essentials in her own family, a task all the easier of fulfilment because female labour is not so much in request in France as it is in Great Britain. Thus the workman's home is clean, his fare good and his children well reared: as a result he does not fly to the public-house and he is usually a good husband. The unutterably horrible conditions of London slums do not prevail in France; if we make every allowance for bad housing, an antiquated land system, eccentric land taxation and intemperance, a share of the responsibility still rests on the incompetent and slatternly wives. I must repeat that they are ground down by evil social conditions unknown in France, but my object is not so much to shed light on the causes of the French working woman's superiority as to show where it is manifest.

It should be mentioned that the French woman's problems are simplified by the low birthrate; the calls on the household funds are obviously less, and, above all, the French woman can find time to be a wife as well as a mother and to create for her husband a home where he is not looked upon as an interloper, entitled solely to toleration as the father of the children. From this point of view also the French woman is interesting, for she is at least as characteristic a mother as she is a wife.

I do not pretend to define the perfect mother; whether the "Spartan" type, cold, narrow and wedded to duty, or the tender, caressing matron, is the ideal type can only be determined by considering the characteristics of the offspring. The Hottentot Venus differs in line from the Greek Aphrodite: likewise it may be said that a people has the mothers it needs and the mothers it

deserves. We must, therefore, take the French mother as she is; we may admire or condemn certain of her traits, but only in relation to British standards, keeping in mind that she is the type that is suitable to the French race.

The outstanding feature of the French mother is her extreme, her animal devotion to her children; maternal love is a ferocious thing, ready at a pinch to devour the mother herself: in France it is carried to sublime lengths of devotion, to sublime lengths of folly. Owing perhaps to the fact that families are so small that they so often number but one child, the mother's love concentrates itself round but few objects; it gains in intensity that which it loses in extent.

The child is everything; its well-being, its training, its education are the mother's perpetual care; French households do not know the nursery where the child is given over to hirelings; it hardly knows the Kindergarten where it is estranged from its mother, the boarding school at an early age where the gentle boy is coarsened and brutalised. Not only does the French mother usually nurse her own baby, but in later years she will attend to its feeding and clothing herself; she will herself give it its first lessons, make it her playmate as well as her toy. In these respects she does not differ from the best British mothers, but the average type seems superior to that known in these isles.

Where the most striking contrast appears, however, is in the matter of education. Even among the working classes, home education is a feature, particularly regards the girls; France does not, in this direction, suffer from the handicap that afflicts Great Britain, where evil social conditions have driven women into the labour

market, into the hands of the sweater. Among the middle classes, every mother seems to have but one idea : to raise the child by educating it under pressure. The working woman wants her son to be a clerk or an official ; the lower middle-class woman aims at the professions ; the professions dream of politics and the arts.

To do all this, the classes do not spare themselves ; they are not content with sending the sons to school and the daughters to convents ; they (and by "they" I mean the women) send their children to day schools and either take part themselves in their work or give them every possible opportunity, by means of special tuition or foreign servants, of achieving scholastic success in general knowledge of European languages.

Willingly does the French woman, that reputedly frivolous being, renounce pleasure in this cause ; she practises rigid economy so as to give her sons a start in life, her daughters a chance of marrying easily. She gives her time and her energy to this most complete duty of women and reaps a harvest of progressing generations and filial love. It would be easy to dilate on the subject ; it might be admissible to do so, even if no new facts were quoted, so as to drive home the truth that, for devotion and self-abnegation, she cannot be equalled or even rivalled. Devoted mothers are not confined to France ; they are to be found among all races and it would be a sad day for the race that lost them, but the investigator is struck by the fact that devotion is the rule and not the exception in all classes of French society.

With the French mother's virtues, as with those of the French wife, go the defects inherent to all extremes.

Her devotion often goes too far: it would tend to estrange her from her husband if the latter did not, as a rule, participate proudly in this votive offering at the shrine of his child. It is on the latter, however, that this excess of devotion reacts unfavourably; the child is often "spoiled" by being made the cynosure of all eyes, by feeling that it is the main asset of family happiness; thus it grows up exacting, fretful and impatient of restraint, which may account for the peculiarities of modern France.

The spoiled child is, however, as a rule, cured by the rough discipline of school, the sons by the still rougher teaching of the regiment and the daughters by the semi-zenana *régime* to which they are subjected at an early age. The more serious aspect of the question is that children are too carefully shielded, that too much love and care are lavished upon them, so that they do not grow up sturdy and self-reliant. The French mother is only now giving way, and that reluctantly, to more enlightened ideas; she still fears for her child the sun, the rain, the dangers of the street. She still looks askance at athletics, enthusiastic as she may outwardly seem when British methods are discussed; the fear of draughts in the house, of boating and swimming, of cycling even, are always with her: the elements and the Fates seem to her to be in league to rob her of her dearest possession, so she guards it jealously, much to the detriment of its courage and its energy.

One still sees now and then a boy of fourteen subjected to the ignominy of being conducted daily to and from school by a female servant; the more painful side of the practice is that the boy submits. Is such a *régime* conducive to developing his personality?

Hardly; yet the system prevails and clearly demonstrates why French women are not makers of men. The fetters of the boy are not struck off when he reaches man's estate; the mother's love is to him a handicap, for it influences his conduct and warps his ambition. The French mother has a horror of the uncertain and loves to picture for her son the peaceful serenity of an official appointment leading up to a pension; she dislikes the risks of commerce and of industry and the great unknown of the professions: as for adventure, emigration, the colonies, they are for her haunting, ever-present phantoms.

The French mother is ambitious, but her ambition does not soar; she asks for a life of well-being, not of great deeds: thus she clips the wings of her fledgling, stunts the development of its character, though she fosters the development of its intellect. Her love is deep but narrow and she never realises the folly of hanging round the child's neck the millstone of an exacting affection. She meddles in the affairs of her sons, attempts, careless of their tendencies, to direct them into the channel she chooses and works to an extent that is hardly fair upon the love that they bear her.

French women are an intelligent class, but they are not of those "women of ideas" the sons of whom are blessed in their heredity. They love, but narrowly; they dream, but do not transcend. They reap a rich harvest of filial love and, to the end of their lives, hold in their children's hearts a place of which the British can have no conception; this may seem a sweeping assertion, but there are no "revolting" daughters in France; the sons do not emigrate and defer, not only out of a sense of duty, but by inclination, to their

mother's desires, whether the latter influence their marriage or the choice of a career.

It is hard to arrive at a definite conclusion and to decide whether the mothers of France are or are not the perfect type; the theory that they are the most suited to their own people is probably the correct view, this being supported by the conclusion arrived at as regards the French wife. If we consider the sum total of their virtues and their faults, a substantial balance stands to their credit—a fact to which the esteem and reverence in which they are held by the people of France amply bear witness. An analysis of woman's position as wife and mother does not, however, exhaust the possibilities of appreciation; narrow as the field of woman may be, there are still for her other occupations than the discharge of maternal duties. Let it be said at once that this state of things does not prevail in France to a degree comparable with the situation in Great Britain. The limited population of France and the fact that there is no excess of female births to be coped with have placed the country beyond the difficulties that confront the Anglo-Saxon race; the problem of the single woman has thus been deeply modified.

Whether we consider the working or the middle class in France, we are at once struck by the comparative restriction of female employment; women have, of course, the quasi-monopoly of domestic service, millinery and dressmaking, but they do not outnumber men in shops and stores, nor have they captured employment in the refreshment trades as has been the case in Great Britain. The female attendant is the exception, not the rule, singular as this may seem to a nation accustomed to be ministered to exclusively by women or foreigners.

In general business the same phenomenon may be observed, for clerks, cashiers, typists, messengers, etc. are almost invariably men. Even the factories do not to a noticeable extent employ women, the only direction in which they find more scope than in Great Britain being in agriculture.

Opportunities for women are thus comparatively few, and that for obvious reasons. In a general way it may be said that supply inevitably creates demand, and that, if French women came readily into the labour market, they would obtain a larger share of employment. The women of France do not, to an appreciable extent, attempt to oust man from his position, in great part because they are not usually compelled to earn their own living by other means than household duties. As regards the working classes, a fair measure of industrial prosperity enables them to keep up comfortable homes without compelling wives to contribute to the family budget; the children not being over-numerous, it is not necessary that it should be inordinately large; housing conditions being fairly good, drunkenness is not prevalent, so that ends can be made to meet. The daughters do, as a matter of course, engage in some employment, but they rarely look upon it as anything but an interlude to which marriage will soon put an end. Moreover, the thrift of the nation enables them to marry easily, when they automatically make way for others, instead of swelling indefinitely the ranks of the wage earners.

The difference between France and Great Britain is in this respect far more apparent among the middle and lower middle classes. They do not look upon it as a matter of course that their daughters should engage

in remunerative employment, mainly because it is usually unnecessary; there is, moreover, very little desire among French girls to "live their own lives," or to attain comparative independence, for they still look upon marriage as their natural career. It is unusual for a French girl whose parents are in humble, but comfortable, circumstances to enter the labour market and undersell men for the sake of pin-money, and this must be taken into account when we examine the causes of French prosperity.

It cannot too well be understood that France has not to face the common British problem of large families consisting mainly of girls; the reasons for this are not easily explained, though Dr. A. Weill tentatively submits a theory of sex based on the superior "life-force" of French women. Be that as it may, the small French families do not contain an undue proportion of daughters, so that the girls are not driven out by the needs of the family and perpetual association with their own sex. For all these reasons the French woman need hardly be considered as a wage earner, especially as, in this direction, she does not display the capacities which she exercises when in charge of her own affairs. She is competent and careful, without great originality, but as much might be said of women of any other nation, so that it becomes unnecessary to enlarge on the point. It should be noted, in passing, that the more intellectual section of French women has taken an energetic line with a view to extending opportunities for their fellows; they have, as in England, extensively entered the ranks of medicine, and the fact that Mademoiselle Chauvin[1]

[1] Since Mademoiselle Chauvin succeeded in her efforts, several ladies have been called to the Paris Bar.

has, after great commotion, succeeded in becoming a barrister, shows that the coveted profession of the law has in France been opened to women whilst England still lagged behind.

Generally speaking, the French woman does not aspire to become the predominant partner, nor does she claim equality, because she is already in possession of influence. She still cherishes a desire for the admiration and respect of men, and willingly submits to irksome conditions, knowing that the barriers will be removed on their marriage. She has not entirely emerged from the older tradition of subservience, and still looks upon man as the superior being, whose regard and protection it is desirable to secure. She would not be willing to accept confinement in a harem, but she is not anxious to compete with men on their own ground. It is in great part for these reasons that Suffragism is so undeveloped in France. During the last two or three years agitation has begun, and has resulted in a few isolated meetings and processions, but, for all practical purposes, the movement is non-existent; the public takes no interest in it, nor are women's organisations numerous or powerful enough to adopt the conspicuous methods which have, in Great Britain, made women's suffrage a question of the day. It is hardly permissible to say that the demand will not grow insistent; it is in the nature of things that it should, and it must be obvious to the fair-minded observer that women of all nations will ultimately attain political equality with men, a place to which they are entitled; the time has not yet come in France, partly because women live under too favourable conditions, but mainly because they are too individualistic

and do not take themselves seriously as a sex; until they do so and accept the responsibilities that this assumption would entail upon them, they can only make headway slowly and struggle obscurely among other inchoate political parties.

French women have, however, a far more subtle and powerful hold upon the male sex than is the case in this country. They are practically indispensable to men, who do not habitually seek one another's society, and look upon women as essential in their lives. This is interesting, in view of the attitude of the male sex in Great Britain, well content as it appears to be to forgo the society of women and to take its pleasures apart from them. It is in great part for this reason that clubs, which flourish everywhere in Great Britain and in every walk of life, have not succeeded in France, where they are few, have little influence, and are held by their members in small esteem; they are, as a rule, nothing but gambling houses, instead of being luxurious homes where men can either avoid all society or, at any rate, that of the other sex.

If clubs have not succeeded in France, it is mainly because their membership had to be confined to the male sex and because, therefore, men would not join them; a striking instance, of late years, has been the Racing Club of France, the Paris "Ranelagh," which is very successful and has over 1500 members; of these several hundreds are women. But for the latter the Club would never have attained its present height of popularity and fashion.

In general, Frenchmen concern themselves far more with the tastes and opinions of their womenkind than is the case in this country; they have an everlasting faculty

of wonder, as regards the *ewig weibliche*, as is evinced by their literature and their drama, based upon the study of woman *in excelsis* of her moods and her passions. Many raise this interest to the level of an obsession, which is confessedly detrimental to the race; the "lady killer," a type not unknown in Great Britain, is far more frequently met with in France. In that country, the sedate middle-aged *bourgeois* looks back complacently upon a past of which he is proud in direct ratio to its luridity, a feeling mainly traceable to the place that women hold in Frenchmen's minds.

The French attitude can best be summed up by a chance remark made in a private conversation by M. de Wieczeliski, a Slav by birth, a Frenchman by adoption, who, when charged with talking too much about women, summed up the matter in an aphorism satisfactory to most Frenchmen: *Il n'y a rien de plus important que les dames!*

CHAPTER XVI

MARRIAGE

THE conditions of wedded life are a thorny subject to deal with, owing to the deep-rooted prejudices that confront those who wish to speak plainly to an idealistic or rather sentimental people such as the British. They conceive of marriage on different lines from other peoples and are inclined to resent hotly any disagreement with their views. A difference of conception, a difference of point of view, of moral attitude, appear to them in the light of an insult to be treated with contempt or indignantly flouted. Yet I cannot help thinking that it is essential to deal with the subject, so as to endeavour to clear up some old-established misunderstandings concerning the conditions of marriage in France; large as may be the yearly quota of balderdash that is spoken and written of the French in other directions, no question is dealt with more lightly and less honestly.

This is a regrettable state of things and it is of course traceable to a difference of point of view. Most human differences are attributable to this cause and this is no exceptional case; an absolutely fair-minded man may find it difficult to distinguish good from evil, harassed as he is by doubts and reservations, conscious of the fact that nationalities as well as circumstances alter

cases. As regards marriage in particular, the difference between the French and the British lies mainly in a dissimilar conception of the nature of marriage itself. To the British, it is still, in the majority of cases, a sacrament fraught with the gravest religious and moral consequences; it entails definite duties upon contracting parties and is based on renunciation of liberty. Those who do not consider marriage in the abstract and remain uninfluenced by its spiritual aspects are inclined to regard it as a sublime sacrifice of adoration and, on the day of their wedding, erect a monument to the ultimate height of sentiment.

This is a lofty view, proud and intolerant in its beauty, as is ever beauty absolute. Thus it becomes difficult for the average man, particularly when unspoiled by the shattering of his illusions, to appreciate the more prevalent French view that marriage is a contract, independent of sentimental affinities, of spiritual communion. This must not be accepted without qualification, for we shall see that the uplifting of love and the graces of sentiment are far from unknown to the Frenchman. Yet, on the whole, his attitude towards marriage is not that of the British and the idea of contract contributes powerfully to the difference.

The idea has been deeply implanted in the French race, and it is no subject for astonishment if we take into account the characteristics of the nation. The French are a methodical and careful people, lovers of preciseness in speech and deed, disinclined to take unnecessary risks; the happy-go-lucky practice that governs the unions of Anglo-Saxon peoples is not to their taste, for it carries in its train the haunting fear

of poverty, unsuitability and ultimate disunion. They administer their country with minute regard for detail, leaving nothing to chance; their literature rises to its greatest height when it tells a tale simply and clearly; even their pageants are wonders of forethought and organisation. It would, indeed, be remarkable if they had not attempted to rule and direct into a given channel the all-important current of natural selection.

If the French have put marriage on a scientific, not to say commercial, basis, it is because they invariably look ahead and like to see mapped out before them, not only their own career, but that of their children. Their innate carefulness and their somewhat mercenary tendencies incline them to make marriage part of their career as well as of their higher life. Whenever such a combination is attempted, the grosser is bound to prevail over the finer; thus the idea of marriage as a solemn and beautiful thing has receded, whilst the material aspects have tended to bulk even larger. Above all, the love of family and respect for its ties have powerfully influenced the question; the French are not ready to accept the theory that human beings should mate in haphazard fashion and bring into the world an unlimited number of children for whom they cannot adequately provide. For them the family is the all-important question, and they are anxious to establish it on sound lines, with a view to retaining for it the social status of the parents or attaining if possible a higher one. This attitude towards the family is reflected by the low birthrate, but it also influences the prior question of marriage; the French deem it essential that potential parents should bequeath to their children something more than health and

moral courage; indeed, they do not appear to attach much importance to the latter quality, but they believe in an irreducible minimum of fortune below which happiness cannot be attained. They are not content with the assurance that the parents' intellectual vigour will enable them to face successfully the struggle for life and give their children a fair start: they insist that the possession of capital enabling them to look forward for themselves to an old age free from anxiety, and for their children to the certainty of their ultimately inheriting a small independence, is an essential condition which must be fulfilled if the union is to be a success. There may be much to say both for and against this theory; repellent as it may be to some, it is worthy of consideration, as it is held by a great people. A few remarks on the incidents leading up to marriage and the events that may follow upon it should clear up some misunderstandings on the subject, which are unfortunately too prevalent in this country.

Since marriage is regarded as a contract, it becomes important to ensure that it shall be entered upon with due care and foresight; amative aberration must be guarded against, as it might easily frustrate the efforts of the parents. Thus the French have been led to seclude their daughters and to watch over them jealously, so as to avoid their being attracted to undesirables, i.e. to those whose means are looked upon as being insufficient. In this respect popular belief has gone astray in this country, where it is often held that French girls are practically confined in a harem, that they are not allowed to look at, far less to speak to a man. Like many ridiculous misconceptions, it has a

substratum of truth, but we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by it. It is true that a peculiar code does govern the relations of the sexes in France and that it tends to keep them apart; it is well known that they do not mix freely in society and games as they do in this country. For instance, French entertainments and particularly dances differ widely from their British counterparts; French girls are more severely chaperoned and are not usually allowed to sit out with their partners, but are expected to keep within the range of the maternal eye. If they indulge in athletics, though of late years much progress has been made, they are also supervised continually and can never hope for the freedom of intercourse that characterises these relations in Great Britain; they rarely go out unattended or hustle it in shops and traffic as do their British sisters.

This said, however, we must qualify these apparently rigid restrictions; chaperonage is continuous but it is fairly benign and only makes itself felt when there is a tendency to abuse what liberty is granted; I will not pretend to decide which is the better, the British system of trust, which tends to defeminise women, or the French methods, the result of which is to oversex them. The constant tendency to harp upon sex differences, so prevalent in France, imbues sex with a peculiar interest so noticeably absent in Great Britain, where restrictions do not make themselves felt; this is an unfortunate result, but it should not be forgotten that the French mother has to deal with Frenchmen, who are rather different from Englishmen, and so other methods must be used.

A great deal might be said about French and English systems, as applied to the training of girls, but it is

hardly within the scope of this chapter; the essential point is that we should understand that French girls are not so entirely segregated as is often imagined and that they are rapidly improving their position; they are allowed freer intercourse with men than was the case a few years ago, can make their opinions known, and thus acquire an even better-established right to choose their husbands. One of the difficulties of the problem lies with the French youth, governed as he is by canons differing from those of the Englishman; we cannot hope to apply to him the rules that control us, because he has evolved differently.

The young Frenchman rarely looks upon marriage in the same light as the Englishman, except that both are given to considering it a peril to be shunned as long as possible; the French usually look upon it as a refuge for the destitute when the sweets of life have been tasted to the full, whereas the British are more neutral, careless as they are of woman in the abstract, so that their attitude is rather one of abstention in favour of masculine society. Generally speaking the Frenchman marries later than is the case in this country and "lives" (as the word goes) to a far fuller extent; he need not be a rake, but he is given to disdaining steadiness and rarely attains the age of marriage with his illusions entire; he may thus save himself from the painful, if inevitable, process of seeing them shattered, but that is a side issue.

Given, therefore, that it is if anything in a man's favour to have sown a plentiful crop of wild oats, given indeed that the "steady" young man is not looked upon with favour by mothers or daughters, it is not surprising that the sexes should be kept apart or at

any rate carefully watched. It is undeniable that this process of watching increases sex interest, but it is also true that keen sex interest makes watching necessary; both processes react upon one another: thus, as we have to take things as we find them, the reasons for the course that is followed must be apparent.

We must also take into account the fact that paternal authority is, in France, a far more important factor than it is in Great Britain; a father may hope for affection and respect in any country, but his position is enormously strengthened when the law endows him with special rights. In this particular case, his power to prevent the marriage of his sons before the age of twenty-five and that of his daughters before twenty-one is of notable interest; these powers are thoroughly effective, as no *maire* acting as registrar may omit to ascertain whether parental consent to the union has been given. If we add to this the fact that a dowry is the rule and that it can be withheld where the parents object to a marriage, it will be readily understood how strong is the hold that parents have on their children; thus they are enabled to hold them in check, to curb their inclinations, and to direct them without much difficulty into the desired channel.

Parents generally exercise their power with a view to making as suitable a match as possible for their children and in this, the "marriage of convenience," we at once come across a profound divergence from British ideas. Whereas the great majority of betrothals in these islands are entered upon freely by young men and maidens, who have afterwards to gain the consent of their parents, in France the process is inverted: the marriage is likely to be arranged by the parents and

acceded to by the children. These facts are not novel and are only mentioned for the purpose of leading up to an important qualification; there exists an impression in this country that sons and daughters are hardly consulted at all and that their consent is not asked; in fact public opinion seems seriously to accept the view that French girls have usually as much say in the selection of their husbands as the Turkish child-bride. Facts, however, point to the contrary; although girls are sometimes forced into distasteful marriages (and this is not unknown in Great Britain), in the great majority of cases they are enabled to gain more than a mere impression of their suitor and, though they may not themselves select him, they will probably single him out from among several aspirants.

Marriage in France is not free selection, but it is not slavery; French girls are taught to look upon marriage in the light of a contract, just as are their future husbands: thus they make no demands on sentiment and do not, as a rule, expect to wed a lover as well as a husband. Their choice may be limited, but within these limits it is free; whether the system be salutary or noxious can only appear from its results.

The very fact that this system has produced an intelligent and interesting race, so many united families and such good citizens should certainly militate in its favour. Without supporting either the marriage of convenience or freedom of choice, one cannot help thinking, if one considers results, that the former does not deserve the abuse that is so frequently showered upon it. One of its main advantages is the restraint that it imposes on rash and improvident unions, rash not only as regards material matters, but with regard to natural

suitability or its opposite. Instinct may often lead us to our goal, but often too it leads us astray; the records of the divorce courts show that they have too often had to deal with the outcome of passionate but ephemeral attachments. Thus, though this is not an indictment of "love matches," it is allowable to say that the French system may, in the long run, save the young and impetuous from spoiling their lives.

If we take as a type the better class of marriage of convenience, i.e. that which is not based solely on monetary considerations, one cannot help thinking that a "reasonable choice" is preferable to the dive into the unlucky bag in which our youth so often indulges. Given a daughter, the French family will seek out for her a man of suitable age, of sufficient means (not as a rule of greater wealth, as will be shown further on) and of equal social standing; in fact, if I dare put it so crudely, they seek for their children the most suitable mate, just as they might do for a prize mare or stallion; such a suggestion may be revolting in its bluntness, but can any scientific reason be discerned why we should regulate so minutely the heredity of our horses and be so neglectful of our own?

The practical aspects of the marriage of convenience are as important as the theoretical. There is no glamour of illusion at the inception of marriage; the bride or bridegroom elect is looked upon as satisfactory, but not as the one and only predestined twin soul. Thus, the *débâcle* that so often overwhelms those who have wedded in haste is hardly to be feared; a cunning French proverb tells us that "The higher the level you fall from, the more it hurts"; can anything be more appropriate to an institution such as marriage which

must inevitably rub the gilt off the idyllic gingerbread? The artistic temperament, which even the most matter-of-fact persons develop in the halcyon days, shrinks from the greyness that the foregoing conjures up and clamours for light and shade; the position is admirable, but it can only be justified if the shade be fairly balanced by the light. The marriage of convenience entails few risks and does not involve the parties in struggles with the world; for those who are ready to admit that to be insured against unhappiness is to be happy, the institution is admissible, even admirable.

Practically speaking, moreover, the marriage of convenience is an effectual safeguard against *mésalliances.* I do not propose to claim the reader's sympathy for the aristocratic families whose scions evince a partiality for the charms of *bourgeoises* whose fathers they despise, for it is not certain, in such unions, which side has the better bargain; yet it is obvious that the classes do not, as a rule, mix at all successfully. Differences of training, and especially of environment, must inevitably tell unfavourably; however healthy the infusion of new blood may be as regards posterity, the parties themselves must suffer, for marriage is not a kaleidoscope, and different colours are more likely to clash than to harmonise.

Scientifically and materially sound as the marriage of convenience appears, it is useless to endeavour to conceal from ourselves how unsatisfactory it is at the root. The description I have given must suggest a coldness with which one could hardly credit warm French hearts; there is for us something revolting in this matrimonial mercantilism, something unexplainable but instinctive. It suggests the parlour of a nunnery,

where cleanliness reigns supreme, where austere beauty has a home, but where not a breath of the surging, struggling humanity beyond its walls can hope to penetrate. Were it not for their well-beloved children, married couples would in France be lonely and desolate, so that the seed of immorality, thriving in the wastes where love cannot take root, would flourish in fashion traditional. The child is the saviour and the fountain of peace.

It should not be inferred, however, that there are in France no "love matches." They are the rule among the working classes and are frequent in the *bourgeoisie*, facilitated as they are by the institution of the dowry. The *dot* is the basis of most French marriages, arranged or not. All classes are concerned with the question, and look upon the possession of a dowry as the rule; indeed, the lot of those women whose parents cannot give them a marriage portion is a sad one; it usually resolves itself into an unhonoured spinsterhood, for the French have not yet realised our vigorous type of bachelor girl. It is not a sweeping assertion to say that families who do not set aside a sum, large or small, as a dowry for their daughters, are in France the exception; whether we have to deal with the wealthy who think little of dowries of £4,000 to £40,000, or with the working classes whose daughters can often defray the cost of their trousseau and of their furniture, we find the idea of the dowry implanted in the French mind. In the same manner as parents stint themselves to educate their children and to make provision for their own old age, they stint themselves to give their daughters dowries that will enable them to marry with a fair chance of success. Then the tragedy of thrift repeats itself: the duty is handed on and willingly accepted.

So deeply rooted is this idea of the dowry that it is recognised by military law, which does not allow an officer to marry unless he and his wife jointly possess, over and above his pay, private means to an amount commensurate with his rank. This should not be taken as meaning that the undowered cannot marry, but the officer who infringes this regulation is liable to a perfectly legal penalty. Such a fact should demonstrate how ingrained is the theory that dowries are the rule, not the exception.

Quarrel as we may with the marriage of convenience, it is difficult to cavil at the *dot*. Is not the frequent position of the dowerless in Great Britain worthy of our sympathy? Bred in the tradition of sentiment, thrown into continual contact with one another, the youth of this country naturally form attachments without regard for material questions; then comes the conflict with parental prudence and the miseries that follow in its train; interminable engagements, waning hopes and ofttimes the death by starvation of a tender sentiment. Those attachments that survive are made of stern stuff, but is it necessary to subject them to so cruel a test? Must we have a struggle for love as well as a struggle for life?

The dowry would and does obviate all this misery, for it enables the parent, when convinced of the sincerity and of the character of the suitor, to bring about the marriage without undue delay. Many are the marriages to which parents would willingly agree which cannot be brought about for years because nothing has been set aside for the daughters. Husbands are confronted with means for one and needs for two: is it strange that they should prove reluctant and that our bachelors and spinsters should become ever more numerous?

It is neither necessary nor advisable that couples should, at the outset, have large private means, for they will need more as their age and responsibilities increase, but surely there is nothing abnormal or mercenary in the husband's demand that a wife should bring him a little more than the burden of her expenditure and the services of a more or less efficient housekeeper, in exchange for the increase in his responsibilities, affection being taken as mutual.

A dowry is better than an inheritance ; it enables the young to marry, for the greater benefit of the race and of the happiness of their own lives. If an endowment policy, maturing in its majority, could be taken out at birth for every child, we should have gone some way towards procuring the happiness of the people ; indeed, it is not too much to hope that the attention of the legislator may ultimately be drawn in this direction and that to old age pensions and compulsory insurance we may see added compulsory endowment of children, all these funds being defrayed partly by the parents and partly by the State. This would certainly give a healthy tone to parental responsibility . . . but we must refrain from making an excursion into even so fascinating a Utopia.

Having thus reviewed the conditions under which marriage is usually contracted in France, and outlined the obvious advantages and disadvantages which are bound up in them, let us turn to the practical aspects of the question. So far, our consideration has been largely theoretical, for our analysis could only yield an idea of the probable results of the French system ; the test of the pudding lying in the eating, we must obviously inquire as to the effects upon marriage of the manifold

customs and precautions with which it is hedged in France.

The most interesting point is, beyond doubt, the prevalent British impression that infidelity is a feature of French life and that scruples on either side are the exception rather than the rule; above all, it seems to be taken for granted that Frenchmen of all classes are immoral as a matter of course and that men look upon "second establishments" as part of their daily life. I do not for a moment hesitate to say that this is a gross slander and that it becomes all the more despicable because it is so difficult to refute. All that can be arrayed against a sweeping generality is another generality, a poor means of carrying conviction, but in this case the only means that exist. The women of France, to deal with them to the exclusion of the other sex, have been vilified in so many books and on so many stages that even their compatriots seem to have imbibed the idea that their morals are doubtful. Naturally enough opinion abroad has followed suit and has branded with a common anathema one half of the French race.

It will at once be said that the impression would never have taken shape if there had been no grounds for it and, in a measure, this is the truth or rather half the truth. There is a section of French womanhood for which the word "morality" has no meaning, a section rather unmoral than immoral; this section is to be found mainly among the "Smart Set" of the great cities: any one who knows how small a proportion of the population this represents will realise the unfairness of judging the race by this body. I do not know of how many persons the "upper ten thousand" are com-

posed, but if there be any justification for the name they would number less than one in four thousand of our total population! Let that be as it may, it remains certain that, outside this class, we have to deal with different standards; it is because these people are wealthy, demoralised by their wealth and exposed to the public eye, that their lives form the basis of the sensational novels from which we are given to gaining an idea of French morality. In the same manner as no novel could be successful, some decades ago, unless its characters were selected from the peerage, nowadays it appears to be taken for granted by the authors of French yellow-backs that the "smart" society of Paris and its amorous excesses can alone supply readable matter.

The immense majority of the women of the French middle classes are conspicuous for rectitude, even rigidity of morals; their propriety often resolves itself into prudery and pitilessly narrow codes; thus actresses and divorced women are still outcasts in French society. The marriage of convenience is calculated to starve a woman's heart and to deliver her defenceless into the hands of any adventurer; that which the husband cannot give would naturally be expected from the lover: yet this result does not follow. French women have, on the one hand, an immense respect for family ties and shrink from all risks of compromission; on the other hand, they do not seem to make the demand for love that do more sentimental peoples: they are inclined to seek satisfaction in the care of their homes and children. To place love on a pedestal is to put a premium on passion; where love is largely replaced by an affection grown strong by habit, such a peril is largely decreased.

Thus, as regards the women of France, we may look upon the marriage of convenience as devoid of the evils we see in it; it must not be forgotten that they accept their husbands willingly and that a man even far removed from the ideal normally occupies the unique position of the first lover, a position from which not even the strongest passion can oust him. In practice, therefore, French women find in marriage all the satisfactions they desire, simply because they have not been taught to expect more than it could give.

The position of the man is somewhat different. In the first place, choice lies with him to a greater extent than with his future wife; man is not so easily coerced and gains far less by marriage than woman, for whom it means freedom and a status which, even in this country, is refused to spinsters. Thus personal attraction plays with him a greater part, so that he can usually be held to have contracted a "love match." In this case, his problems are the same as those which confront men in this country; in the contrary case his situation is more complex. In view of the fact that he almost invariably lives his life before marriage, he enters upon matrimony in one of two moods: he either treats it lightly or he looks upon it as a refuge for his declining years. In the latter case, the chances of his indulging in immorality to any great extent are of course small, as he probably longs for repose and for the contented security of a happy home.

The difficulty is greater when a Frenchman contracts a marriage of convenience, either lightly or with purely mercenary views. His position is not similar to that of

his wife, for he has probably drunk deeply of the sweets of life and has learned what pleasures it can provide, even for jaded appetites. After a more or less long period of fidelity his past has a tendency to rise before his eyes, attired with all the attractive colours of days long ago. Moreover, even if romance has never been born in him or has succumbed to excesses, the original attractions of his wife not being very potent, her society and resources pall upon him and, if he be fairly young, his temperament may easily lead him astray.

All these are obvious perils bound up with the marriage of convenience and I do not contend that a number of Frenchmen do not give way before their combination; another section is influenced by books, the high literary merit of which does not palliate the fact that they accustom the reader to regard adultery as normal. But if we exclude these two classes, and there exists no means of estimating exactly the numerical relation they bear to the nation, we are confronted with an immense body of men whose private life is beyond reproach. Without exaggeration it may be said that an overwhelming majority of Frenchmen are, in spite of temperament and training, rigidly faithful to their marriage vows. The reason is not far to seek; the class that contracts a marriage of convenience is composed, as a rule, of men of fairly mature years. They do not necessarily look upon their union as being anything more than a legal contract; the sacramental idea does not enter their minds, and although they are not swayed by an overpowering sense of the sanctity of contracts, they remain, on the whole, faithful to their wives.

As they have no moral reason for abstention, the

conclusion must obviously be that they have no desire to break their marital vows. The life that the average Frenchman of thirty has led is of such a nature as to have deprived him of curiosity, to which characteristic we can trace most of our excesses, and that all the world over. He is probably satiated, perhaps even weary of adventure and all its crudity, its ugliness; thus, for him marriage is a peaceful haven which he is not tempted to forsake; a gust of passion may carry him away, but it is usually short-lived, rarely recurrent: the phenomenon is not confined to Frenchmen. At heart, the Frenchman, when stripped of the affectations of gaudy cynicism which he feels he must live up to, is profoundly enamoured of regular living, peace and domestic happiness. He is not inclined to jeopardise these blessings and hardly desires to do so: he settles down, as the saying goes, and that for all time.

Thus, it is ridiculous to refer to "second establishments" as a feature of French life. It has often been my fate to be asked whether Frenchmen do not look upon the practice as perfectly normal; a moment of thought should tell the querists that it is not given to most men to encounter the temptation, in view of the expense it entails; that alone would prove a stumbling-block, particularly for a race neither liberal nor over-wealthy. It is not too much to say that the practice is nearly as common in Great Britain as it is in France: the difference lies in the fact that the Frenchman brags of that which the Englishman conceals. I am not attempting to prove that morality (as we understand the term) stands on as high a pinnacle in France as it does in this country: that is not the case, but our impression of the looseness of French morals is very much

exaggerated. Among the French "Smart Set" the practice does prevail; but "Smart Sets" are vicious all the world over or they would not be "smart"; the bulk of the nation lives up to a strict code, from which it does not desire to break away. The French conception appears to be analogous to "Honesty is the best policy," which may be profoundly immoral in theory though excellent in practice, but the world does not punish theories, so that our attention must confine itself to practical results.

It can therefore be assumed that the majority of Frenchmen are either absolutely faithful to their marriage vows or that outbreaks are sporadic and of little practical effect. I may be charged with preaching an immoral doctrine, but if we remember that our moral laws are generally based on practical effects, it may be admitted that the latter state of things is less dreadful than it appears to be doctrinaire. Besides, we must take into account the influence of literature and of public opinion before we brand other men's standards as immoral. It is greatly to the credit of the French that they have not given way to the influence of their writers more than they have and that families have not complacently accepted the putting into practice of literary preaching.

It should be said, in this connection, that the accusation levelled at the French of accepting the state of things that our prejudices have conjured up is neither more nor less true, on the whole, than the other charges. In those classes where infidelity is recognised, and they are small, carelessness naturally prevails; among the sections which do not admit infidelity, there is, of course, no toleration. There are

cases where a French wife will close her eyes to the occasional vagaries of her husband, but most wives have something to overlook: in this case toleration goes a step further and is not often required. Husbands hardly ever accept such a position, however irregular their own conduct may be, and indulge in ferocious jealousy, in which they are supported by the law; in general, both sexes are keenly concerned to maintain the bond and guard it with equal jealousy.

Setting aside the question of morality, the results of French marriages are interesting as regards the children. It is unnecessary to say more on this subject than has already been said in the chapter on "The French Woman." It should, however, be noted that the marriage of convenience makes for devoted parental love. Affection has limits and it is not easy, for a wife particularly, to apportion fairly the shares of husband and children: the coming of the child too often means that a wife must choose: this she does according to her temperament, as a born mother or as a born wife. The Weininger theory admits of no intermediate position; it is a sweeping assumption, but one which is, on the whole, true. This problem, which naturally arises in "love matches," does not bulk largely in the lives of those who marry for convenience; there only a moderate degree of regard exists, so that the coming of the child provokes no crisis: the immense reserves of love that have not been expended by the parents on one another are available for the child, who naturally reaps the full benefit and becomes the sole object of parental solicitude.

To sum up the position, it may be said that the marriage of convenience represents a state of balance; in

its train follow peace, sound domestic finance, education and training for the child, comfort for its elders. It is comparable with a machine, smooth-running and noiseless, unlikely to get out of order, efficient and satisfactory. The ideal marriage of convenience would be the ideal scientific marriage, where physiological and psychological traits would be analysed to a nicety with a view to the production in their offspring of a biologically perfect state of equilibrium.

The practical marriage of convenience is not the scientific marriage, but it appears to work exceedingly well; the records of the police and divorce courts are no guide, as the tragedies we know of do not count for as much as the untold suffering that is borne in secret. The general air of content and prosperity that is seen in French families points to the success of the system wherever it is applied. There are in France many households where regard was the original bond, but there are many more where regard has been the outcome of marriage and whose happiness is perpetually unruffled.

This summing up appears favourable to the institution, as must needs be the case when one wishes to deal in strict fairness with a system one dislikes. Excellent as it may appear, the marriage of convenience is and must remain deeply distasteful to British minds. It is notorious that the practice is becoming more frequent in this country, as desires and general luxuriousness increase, but it has not taken root firmly, nor can it while we remain a sentimental people. The very virtues of the marriage of convenience are the chief counts on which we can indict it; its balance and solidity are fraught with coldness and hardness, elements

which must necessarily detract from its value and indeed almost nullify it, if we admit marriage as a spiritual bond or even as a union of heart and intellect. The marriage of convenience is suitable for those who do not naturally rebel against it, for men who desire naught but money and for women whose wish is for liberty; believers in the communion of spirit and the mutual support of affection must necessarily regard it as an insult to their illusions and as a negation of all the principles that they hold most dear.

CHAPTER XVII

MORALITY

A CHAPTER on this subject may appear superfluous in view of that which has already been said on marriage in France. In that particular study many sidelights are thrown on the subject, and it no doubt touches upon an important aspect of the question—the morality of the people in the married state. Morality has, however, a more comprehensive meaning; it is concerned with the unmarried also and with the intent as well as with the action. Thus it becomes interesting to ascertain the factors which influence the French attitude towards morality in its broader bearing.

I must of course repeat that by "morality" I mean the British code; definitions are always necessary when any subject has to be discussed and none requires precision more urgently than this, because there is no absolute morality any more than there is absolute beauty. Even in our own race we find wide variations; the privileges of the Lord of the Manor as regards the womenkind of his tenants have evolved since the days of, say, William the Conqueror, in a direction which we consider to be satisfactory. This is no doubt satisfactory, but we must remember that, in the days of the Conqueror, these rights were not looked upon as con-

trary to morality; inasmuch as differences of period and of civilisation influence the problem so deeply, we must refrain from hastily branding with the word "immoral" those practices which differ from our own standards. If we hold with Ingersoll that morality is "perceived obligation," then he who does not perceive is absolved from the charge of immorality. He may be non-moral, but if we pardon an agnostic or a Laodicean where we condemn an atheist, we can hardly condemn the man who does not *possess* a moral sense.

All this must be borne in mind when dealing with the French, a simple, clever and hard-headed folk. Their point of view differs from ours; education and surroundings in both countries cannot be compared: thus they have naturally developed on different lines, morally as well as intellectually. On the whole the differences are not very great, far less than between, say, Scotchmen and Italians, but they are sufficiently distinct to form the basis of a comparison.

Generally speaking, the British code being adopted as a standard (and it matters little how high or how low a standard be, provided it be kept in mind), it may be said that the French are morally slack in proportion to the difference of latitude; no originality is claimed for this rediscovery of America, but the fact is worth restating as it is singularly apparent that codes become more rigid as we go further north. Thus, as France is the Central European nation, her standards probably rank between the rigidity of the North and the laxness of the South. I advisedly say "standards," for practice too often falls short of theory, but they represent fairly accurately if not that which the nation is, at least that which it would like to be. In this case, again, France

appears as an average nation; according to our ideas her moral theories are lax, just as they appear strict to the Southern European. If it be true that to satisfy no extremists is evidence of wisdom, then the moral code of France should be about ideal. I do not contend that this is the case, as it is not possible to schedule codes on a mathematical basis, but it is possible.

It is, however, with the standard code of Great Britain that the French code must be compared and at once we find differences of outlook. The race is over-sexed, owing to causes of which more will be said, and it attaches importance to questions of which the somewhat stolid British race has but little idea. This country is not interested in sex, whereas France looks upon it as an important matter, just as the South looks upon it as all-important. Thus a difference in point of view appears at once; we are, in this country, either careless of sex problems, the discussion of which is looked upon as the outcome of prurient speculation, or ashamed of our interest in the question and anxious to conceal it; in France sex problems attract general attention and are openly discussed in public and in private. A keener and clearer idea of sex relations is thus gained, which may not be without value, whatever evils may follow on the acquisition of such knowledge.

Enough has been said of women in a special chapter, both married and single; the general impression is favourable and I do not think that their standard is any lower than that of their English sisters; indeed, they cultivate a greater strictness in social relations: the slightest breath of suspicion endangers any Frenchwoman's position and a divorce is beyond forgiveness.

In this respect British and particularly London society cannot boast itself superior. Men are, however, in a different position; when married they are usually absolutely faithful to their wives or do not err very far; I do not suppose that they compare very unfavourably with equivalent classes in this country, but there lies an abyss between French and British when we have to deal with the single man.

Charges are always levelled at the bachelor and no doubt justifiably so; I do not want to defend him in the abstract, but we should remember, in passing, that bachelordom is an artificial state for man and that he cannot be expected to live a natural life. In France, the conditions that tend towards this result prevail as they do in Great Britain; the bachelor too often lives alone and lacks purpose and resource when the day's work is at an end; he does not indulge much in the nerve tonic of athletics, as a result of which his thoughts would wander naturally, even if he were not surrounded by temptation and the artificial incitements of the stage and literature.

From the British point of view the standards of the French bachelor must necessarily appear low; this is no doubt true as regards the bulk of the class. His interest in woman is usually his sole hobby and he tends to regard all women as legitimate objects for conquest; thus he becomes a master of the arts of Eros and, as he rises in the esteem of his fellows in direct ratio to his success, he has a tendency to transform his hobby into an occupation. It is not too much to say that moral purity, as we understand the term, is practically unknown among French bachelors, except the naturally weakly and occasional theorists; whereas

a large section of our population appears to lead a single life contentedly enough, the Frenchman looks upon the pursuit of woman as normal, even as a duty which he owes his manhood. Above all, it should be noted that he is usually without scruple and will rarely hesitate to take advantage of an opportunity, or even to create it, regardless of the suffering it may entail: for him the pursuit is an elegant game in which all is legitimate and no one sacred.

The marriage of convenience is perhaps somewhat to blame, a fact which may be confirmed by the curious difference in attitude of most Frenchmen towards their friends' wives as opposed to their mistresses. I do not say that this attitude is entirely attributable to a reflex process but it is suggestive; the average French bachelor will not hesitate to lead astray the wife of his friend, undeterred by any consideration of the happiness of the family or even for her children if she have any. He is either careless of the results or confident, in spite of experience, that the intrigue will remain undetected; in fact, many a Frenchman attaches himself more particularly to married women, for reasons which it would be unpleasant to enter into, but which will suggest themselves. As opposed to this, most of them appear to look upon their friend's mistress as removed from the field and to consider it somewhat disgraceful to attempt to become his rival. Singular as the point of view may appear at first sight, it is the natural outcome of the conception of the marriage of convenience, which is considered as resting upon a purely practical basis and not on mutual regard, whereas an irregular relation can proceed only from personal attraction. Thus the sanctity of the marriage tie,

which is respected by most Englishmen, is transferred in France to relationships the irregularity of which does not do away with the sentimental element. This may not be the real explanation, but it is certainly possible and, in any case, the phenomenon is peculiar.

As regards the attitude of Frenchmen to single women, one cannot very well differentiate it from that of men of other races; the fact that girls of the middle classes lead sheltered lives places them beyond the scope of discussion; as regards the working classes, there is no doubt that the standards roughly approximate to those accepted in this and other countries. The only noteworthy fact is again that no secret is made of irregular relations in all classes of society. In Great Britain, particularly in certain industrial towns, illegitimate unions are numerous, but prevail only among the lowest ranks; in France the irregular line includes a more cultured section who do not hesitate to flaunt their emancipation. We must also note in this connection, that, among the working classes, many irregular unions are due to the restrictions of the marriage law. Parental opposition often makes marriage impossible for some years; then the parties break through the restraint, live irregular lives on a regular basis, acknowledge the children of the union, if any, and often marry ultimately when conditions make it possible. This is not regarded as immorality, but as temporary emancipation from morality.

Without displaying cheap cynicism, it may safely be said that the superiority of our moral standard is mainly due to the clamour of a puritan party, to the influence of which we owe stringent police regulations against which no section can decently protest. In our

present state of imperfection, penalties and difficulties are the best means to curb our excesses; these restraints are applied in this country, whilst there is no puritan party in France to demand their imposition. The vigilance of British authorities has resulted in compulsory vigilance on the part of houseowners, and established among them, by fear, that which moral teaching might not have implanted; thus the difficulties that lie in the path of irregularity in Great Britain and the expenditure entailed have served up to a point to keep up public standards. In France this is not the case, as public opinion is careless and the authorities commensurately tolerant.

In the chapter dealing with the birthrate in France, we have seen that it is often artificially restricted, at any rate that it does not tend towards an increase. It is possible that the French race has lost much of its fertility, so that the figures that follow may lose some of their weight; they are, however, worthy of being quoted. Careless immorality does not prevail to such an extent in France as it does in this country, yet it appears that figures dealing with illegitimate births should roughly represent the state of things; at any rate, for purposes of comparison, it seems fair to take these figures as a basis if we adjust them to the known conditions of national morality. It is undeniable that the proportion of illegitimate births is unduly high in France, for it reaches the figure of 89 out of every 1000. About a quarter of these births are recognised by parents, so that the anomaly disappears, but this does not bear upon the question if we only wish to ascertain to what extent irregular unions prevail.

To do this, there appears to be no better means than

a comparison with the figures of illegitimate births per 1000 collected from the official returns of other nations; the following table will therefore prove of interest:—

France	89 per 1000	Norway	70 per 1000
England and Wales	40 ,, ,,	Germany	84 ,, ,,
Scotland	64[1] ,, ,,	*Japan*	*94* ,, ,,
Ireland	26 ,, ,,	*Hungary*	*94* ,, ,,
Holland	22 ,, ,,	*Denmark*	*96* ,, ,,
Russia	26 ,, ,,	*Portugal*	*116* ,, ,,
Switzerland	46 ,, ,,	*Sweden*	*117* ,, ,,
Italy	55 ,, ,,	*Austria*	*130* ,, ,,
Belgium	66 ,, ,,	*Roumania*	*180* ,, ,,

The above table contains statistics from most European countries, except the Balkan States which either give unsatisfactory returns or none, and Greece and Spain for which no reliable figures are available. Japan is included as interesting, if not conclusive, and the United States are omitted because the system of State registration makes compilation a complex matter owing to differences of legal point of view. The table is, however, sufficiently complete to be taken as a basis and, from it, the most suggestive conclusions can be drawn.

From our point of view, the first is the superiority of Great Britain as a whole, in spite of the comparatively high Scottish ratio; it is unnecessary to analyse the causes and the fact remains that our rate does not exceed half that of France. This is a matter for congratulation, but it does not entitle us to brand the French as the immoral race *par excellence* if we consider the case of other European nations. However open to

[1] The latest return gives 69 per 1000.

suspicion the figures relating to Roumania may be, it will not be argued that Sweden, Denmark and Austria are on a low level of civilisation; yet we find the rate of the former exceeds that of France by about a third, whilst Austria's illegitimate births average half as many again as those of France, and Denmark also stands much higher in the list. Germany, the home of domestic virtue, nearly reaches the French standard, which, again, is entirely eclipsed by those of Hungary and Portugal.

It is therefore idle to call the French immoral, for immorality is purely comparative; in general it may be said that "immoral" means "less moral than oneself" and, if that be so, the French may well point the finger of scorn at other nations in all four quarters of Europe. However, I do not wish to lay too much stress on this point; it is enough to note it, as it will serve to silence the more active forms of libel.

It is hardly fair to say that nations are moral when their laws are harsh, and immoral when their laws are lax; there is a subtle connection between crime and penalty, as is shown by statistics; there is a point below which penalties no longer deter and another level above which they are equally unavailing. The penalty of death for theft, for instance, never served to eradicate that form of crime, nor did the abolition of the penalty appreciably increase its prevalence. Yet the Law has some influence on crime and also on that which is looked upon as immoral by organised Society. It may therefore be interesting to note a few points with regard to the attitude of the French Code in this connection.

The French law may be just but it is extremely harsh,

because it persistently disregards the interests of the individual whenever they clash with those of the family. The legislator has invariably kept in mind the desirability of placing the family on a firm footing, and of protecting it against possible disruption. Thus the Code has taken an uncompromising attitude against illegitimate children, in common with most laws, but in a particularly harsh spirit; the illegitimate child has no name but that of its mother, and the law provides no machinery for discovering the father. There can be no affiliation proceedings in France, whatever the circumstances of the case; in the words of the Code, "No illegitimate child may attempt to ascertain the name of its father." It matters little that the most brutal forms of deception and treachery may have been resorted to: the matter cannot even be ventilated, for proceedings cannot be taken. The legislator has but one object: to hush up a possible scandal, which might break up a family or force it to agree to a marriage it dislikes. Criminal proceedings may be instituted against the offender if he has not respected the rights of parents under the law, i.e. effected an abduction, but the individual as an individual receives no protection.

The Code allows the father to recognise his illegitimate child at birth or later, in which case the ban is removed, but this cannot be done if the child be the offspring of adultery. This unfortunately numerous class is nameless and devoid of all rights to inheritance; their disabilities cannot even be removed by the individual, for the law will not allow an illegitimate child to participate in the inheritance of children born in wedlock. It is not even certain whether the new law,

allowing of the marriage of divorced persons with co-respondents, will regularise their position.

As regards the latter question, up to 1906 the law had taken a firm stand against adultery by decreeing that divorced persons could not marry co-respondents; it is notorious that many of the cases decided in British Courts end in such marriages: in France it was hoped to restrict adultery by preventing remarriage. Practice did not show that this result had been attained, and, as it served no useful purpose and only led to considerable unhappiness, the law was repealed, so that French and British custom have now come into line.

Apart from the question of morality, minor facts show how deeply concerned the legislator is with the stability of the family. He decrees, for instance, that all children born in wedlock are deemed to be the husband's and, in the case of widows and divorced women, secures this by prohibiting their remarriage for ten months following on the death of the first husband or on the decree of divorce, whilst a man may remarry without delay. Such small facts are significant and shed a strong light upon the mental outlook of the French. Taken as a whole, every allowance being made for the demands of expediency, French morality reaches neither a very low nor a very high standard. It is probably inferior (on stereotyped lines) to British standards, just as it is superior to those of the South; when we consider the conditions of French life, it is a matter for surprise that the standard is so high as it is.

It is undeniable and unfortunate that, in France, sex interests are too prominent, and that the whole nation is oversexed. So much has been said on the subject in

other chapters that I need not examine once more the relation of the sexes. The fact that they are segregated makes for mystery, but it also makes for a keen desire for enlightenment; too much liberty may produce dangerous licence, but no liberty at all infallibly produces curiosity, the unhealthy root of most human sins. Had the precept of Michelet, "If I had a daughter I would teach her anatomy," been applied in a liberal spirit, it is likely that sex differences would not have resulted in such mutual keenness of interest.

The influences that act upon the French are, however, rather external than internal; if we make every allowance for the unnatural stirring of feeling caused by segregation, we cannot by those means alone explain the fact that Frenchmen are usually so steeped as they are in sex interests. Sensuality does not seem to be common to all human beings; indeed, many appear to be either partly or entirely devoid of it, or to be able to hold it in check so successfully that it does not manifest itself. This large section, units of which are so often to be met with in this country, would normally exist in France if it were not modified by well-defined circumstances. If this colder part of the nation has been brought into line with the rest, it is mainly because it has been driven on by the perpetual incitements of literature, the drama and the arts.

To the influence of these three factors we can boldly ascribe the sensuous turn of the French temperament; by them the eye and the ear of the people are continuously assaulted, in every place and under all conditions. Literature, above all, has settled into an abnormal groove, while British literature has done the same in an opposite direction; as a French journalist

put it wittily, "In English you always marry and in French never." It is not a sweeping assertion to say that modern French novels invariably deal with the relations of the sexes and that their starting point is usually marriage; when it is not marriage, as a rule the developments are beyond ordinary conception and the novelist revels in nauseating fancies. The commoner type of novel, corresponding to the ordinary English six-shilling story, deals as a matter of course with adultery; it assumes the marriage of convenience, introduces the lover or the mistress or both, and proceeds to unfold the everlasting tale of intrigue and secrecy. From time to time, a seriously conceived problem is worked out on Ibsenian lines, but this is the exception: the object of the French novelist usually appears to be to crowd into his book as many suggestive scenes and details as possible. The triumph of the French novel was characteristically shown by a catch phrase concerning a certain novel, which was current in 1898 and 1899, "Have you read page 14?" In that sentence lies the key to the mystery of the French novel.

Another aspect of French literature is also characteristic of the last decade. An extraordinary degree of interest has been aroused by novels dealing with classical times, particularly in Rome, Greece and Carthage. Under the plea of "art," a fallacious excuse for facile pornography, the most unashamed descriptions of the lower aspects of decadent antiquity are given every day: Greek orgies are fashionable and make very good reading for those whose interest in the misdoings of the "Smart Set" has waned. It may be art of the "Living Statue" type, but it raises its

devotees to a great height of conceit; they insolently profess realism and most successfully attain degraded artificiality.

These are the subjects on which French novels have for many years been based, and this is the intellectual pabulum of a large section of the people; no wonder that continual reiteration has accustomed them to regard a low standard of morals as normal and abstention as little short of unnatural. Indeed, so jaded have their intellectual appetites become that novelists are daily descending deeper into the abyss of neurosis, and make frantic efforts to lay before the public something that will arouse its interest. I cannot dilate upon this subject, as the English language invariably turns the licentious into the coarse; let it suffice that the latter-day tendency is to exhume for the benefit of the moderns all the sensual practices of antiquity, shrouded in the trappings of a decadent art, shrinking at no vices, trammelled by no law.

Impure as the French novel may be, it finds its equal in the French drama; it is rare for literature to be on a low moral level without the Stage making full use of its advantages to equal it. Setting aside the serious plays, to which unstinted tribute has been paid in the special chapter dealing with them, we find that the lighter side of drama is nothing but a perpetual incitement to moral laxity. If, in Great Britain, we could draw distinctions in the same manner, which we can hardly do owing to our lack of serious plays, a perfect comparison might be instituted between our farces and those of France; this, however, we can hardly do because they differ profoundly in spirit. British farces, or comedies as they are called, aim purely at entertaining and, to that effect,

take advantage of the ordinary comic situations of life and of the peculiarities of persons and classes; occasionally a spice of the irregular is introduced, but covertly and not with the view of enlisting the sympathies of the audience. In France, characters whom we would look upon as the villains, such as a Letchmere or an Illingworth, are the heroes; their amorous prowess is accounted a virtue and the rectitude of a portion of the cast is made the butt of all the witticisms. The stage husband scores but rarely; as a rule he is made out either a brute or a fool, either intolerably cynical and immoral or inept, gullible and sunk in dull conceit. More often still, the writer of light French plays shows us a complete little world engaged in gratifying its passions, every one illicit, in an absolutely unscrupulous manner. Both men and women are shown deceiving one another, openly bragging of their triumphs and merrily succeeding in escaping punishment. Thus every one of the spectators is taught that sin carries no wages, a fact which reiteration may ultimately lead some to accept.

Over and above the lighter forms of farce, vaudeville and music-hall sketches, the writers of semi-serious plays are also to blame. They, too, tend to take marriage as a starting point and to work up, by the assumption of solemn theories, to its disruption and to the triumph of the illicit. Some of the serious plays even succumb to the temptation and are likely to be even more harmful than light comedy, when constructed on these lines, owing to the skill of the craftsman and the plausibility of the theories which he advances. Taking the French drama as a whole, it may be said that plays dealing with sex questions have a tendency to ridicule stereo-

typed virtue and to glorify that which we call vice. I do not think that plays have a very demoralising effect, for most people do not take seriously that which they see on the stage; yet, this side of the question must not be overlooked when we consider the factors that influence the general tone of morality in France.

It is a matter for surprise that the level of morality is in France as high as it is if we observe that, with literature and the stage, most manifestations of the pictorial arts are also leagued. Not only does the French artist revel in the nude, but he indulges in the suggestive. Authorities may differ as to the advisability of representing the nude, but they agree as to the danger of accustoming the public eye to scenes of obvious licence; whether we turn to the official *Salon*, to private exhibitions or to the illustrated papers the result is the same: modern French art seems to rely as much upon the suggestive as upon the beautiful. Modern art being somewhat morbid and decadent in France, the effort to be singular and novel, which we detect in books, leads the painter to go as far as lax police regulations will allow, so as to attract the attention of the public. The craving for originality that is so apparent in the modern Frenchman is nowhere more continuously manifested than in the arts; musicians attempt to out-Wagner Wagner, and painters perpetually keep in mind the success of the secret Rembrandts. This they can best gain by aiming at the suggestive, and they do not hesitate to do so.

The illustrated paper is, however, the most pestilent form of this particular incitement. Pictures are not seen by the million and they are usually redeemed, at

least in part, by their technique; such is not the case with illustrated papers which enjoy a large circulation. Some of these publications thrive upon nothing but stories and illustrations which would ensure their being at once confiscated by our postal authorities, while many more would barely escape the same fate. Most papers, moreover, devote a portion of their space, either to short stories of doubtful tone or to serials of a similar nature. Not only are these stories and illustrations utterly crude and coarse, but they usually proclaim that no laws and no persons are worthy of respect. Not only are there, in their opinion, no proprieties, but there are no improprieties; they preach emancipation from the social code by glorifying those who flout it, and describing with a wealth of detail the pleasures that the rebel may enjoy.

Thus it may be seen that the Frenchman is exposed to a perpetual assault upon his moral sense. His reading is corrupt, and his art open to suspicion; all the influences at work are against rigidity of morals. Is it wonderful that many succumb and that standards should be lower than in Great Britain, where vigilant censorship is exercised by a small but energetic party? Yet, in spite of these handicaps, and for reasons already stated, the moral attitude in the family is not open to reproach. Based rather on logic than on ethical feeling, it enables the man who has sown a large crop of wild oats to settle into almost rigid respectability and to exercise the many homely virtues he may have flouted in his younger days.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

AS has been said many times already in the course of these chapters, the French character is in this country often misunderstood, in great part owing to its elusiveness and its variety. It is indeed a complex thing and, although it has already been considered from many points of view and certain characteristics have been developed in detail, it may not be superfluous to emphasise some of these; thus we shall glean from them a more general impression—by means of which a few more facts will be brought out which may be of value in view of the false impressions that many Englishmen have formed on the subject.

It appears somewhat difficult to class characteristics unless we divide them into moral and intellectual; even then the classification may be disputed, but, as that is only a matter of definition, we need not pursue the subject. Of the first category are the peculiarities of the French as regards thrift, discipline, domestic feeling, optimism and home life; in the second we may place the qualities or defects of logic, frivolity and quixotism which are more or less developed in the race. This is a rough division, but it will suffice for our purpose.

As regards thrift, the French are probably the most

economical race in the world, for they obtain a maximum of comfort at a minimum of cost, which is the true form of economy, as opposed to purposeless self-denial. But we cannot lay too much stress upon the excesses to which thrift has driven the race; it has hardened the people and often deprived them of human feeling, the peasantry being particularly open to this accusation. The picture drawn by Zola in *La Terre* may be somewhat highly coloured but, in the main, it is true; residence among the peasantry of the villages Zola describes has convinced me of the truth of the terrible picture of avarice and ruthlessness that he so pitilessly paints. Those virtues that make for strength are rarely amiable, and thrift is one of them; the secret of the power of France lies in the indomitable economy of her people, for it is inborn and survives the worst crises. Such catastrophes as the Panama scandals left in their train ruin beyond calculation and yet, within a year, the savings of the country had reconstituted capital, restored the equilibrium of the money market and the quotations of stocks. Whereas Great Britain has but just recovered from the depression following on the South African War, a comparatively cheap contest which did not entail the destruction of a single English home, France, within four years of 1870, had regained her position after paying an indemnity nearly equal to our total Transvaal expenditure and enduring six months' devastation of her soil. These are remarkable facts, and are explained only by the continual exercise of frugality combined with an inexhaustible capacity for labour.

The foregoing has already been fully considered, so let us turn to a peculiarity which is not exclusively

French but which is certainly not British—the facility with which the French adjust themselves to discipline. France never brags of being a "free country," though she enjoys a very full measure of liberty; she tolerates obvious trammels at which we should rail, half-conscious of the fact that she is free from the more subtle bonds in which the British people are confined. Discipline in France makes itself felt everywhere, and is accepted by the people, who are willing to submit to restrictions; the word "prohibited" does not arouse their anger, probably because they are controlled by other men from their childhood upwards. Discipline begins in the family, tender as parents may be, and is never divorced from it in after life. Custom and the law, concerned as they are with the preservation of the family as a unit, provide safeguards of every description against its disruption. The most notable are connected with the right to marry; in Great Britain the legislator's point of view is that the individual must be spared, and provides for the indissolubility of the marriage bond by recognising it under circumstances which would at once vitiate it in the eyes of the French law-maker; with us fraud, misstated age, assumed names, do not stand in the way if it be proved that marriage was intended. From the point of view of the individual this is absolutely sound, as it saves him from the consequences of rashness or dishonesty; the French law does not take this view and considers that the interests of the family rank above those of its members. The law hedges in marriage with precautions of every sort; it allows no marriage ceremony to be performed without the production of documentary evidence of age and of parental consent; furthermore, as regards the latter requirement, if a marriage takes

place in spite of paternal opposition, it even demands proof that parents have been consulted, and their refusal as legally obtained as might have been their consent.

These restrictions may appear galling, but the people rarely rebel, so ingrained is the idea of parental authority. To make licence impossible is not to destroy liberty; the fundamental principle of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, itself the basis of the Constitution, is that the exercise of liberty shall be subject to its injuring no man; this has passed into the law and shows how intimately bound up with the customs of the people is the *régime* under which they live.

Restrictions bearing upon marriage are paralleled by those which limit the disposal of property. It may seem monstrous to restrict freedom of marriage, even for the ultimate good of the people, but it may strike the reader as even harder that the Frenchman may not dispose of his property after his death without restriction or hindrance. In this country, save the unusual case of entail, a man may dispose of his property as he may think fit, create inequalities in the disposal of it, or even disinherit his children. That is a satisfying arrangement enough for the individual, but it does not make for solidity and the solidarity of the home. The French legislator considers that inheritance is normal and that no man may modify its incidence beyond a certain point. The practical outcome of this attitude is that a "reserve" is established which no man may touch; if he have one child he may dispose of only half his property, the other half being irrevocably the child's; if he have two children he may dispose of only one-third and, if he have three or more, of but one-quarter of his estate. It is possible, of course, to

frustrate the law by subterfuge, but, should this be done, legal means are often available to regularise the situation.

The position of the child is a strong one, as is but fair in view of the extent of parental authority; the law does not allow a man to exercise unlimited arbitrariness, not because it sympathises with the child, but because it considers that it is not for the good of the family to allow its possessions to be scattered or ill distributed. This restriction of liberty is curious, but any who are acquainted with the whims of will-makers will agree that it is worthy of consideration.

Apart from inheritance, even during his lifetime, a man may not dispose of his property in a rash manner. In this country, there are no means of restraining the spendthrift, of preventing him from dissipating in a few years the family savings of half a century. It may be argued that he has a right to dispose of his property as he may think fit; it can also be argued that it is not his property but a trust, and that he has no right to waste the substance of the family. For the purpose of coping with this danger, French law has instituted the system of the *Conseil Judiciaire.* This enables the family to control the expenditure of a member by constituting itself into a council and applying to the Courts for the nomination of an official trustee who will take over from the spendthrift his misused spending powers. There is but little danger that the family will make arbitrary use of its privilege, for it can do nothing without the sanction of the Courts and the trustee is always an outsider. The *Conseil Judiciaire* keeps the spendthrift in check and saves him from inevitable bankruptcy: that is not the main object of the legis-

lator: again his sole aim is to safeguard the patrimony of the family even at the cost of individual liberty.

All this tends to show how readily the French accept restrictions, healthy but galling, partly because their "clannishness" is highly developed and partly because of the discipline to which they are subjected. The question of the treatment of girls has been considered in another chapter; the boys are dealt with on different lines. For them is the rough discipline of school, where traces of militarism are always seen, followed by the harsher training of the regiment. Armies do not vary essentially and it is unnecessary to describe the *régime*, though I know it by personal experience to be both thorough and hard; the essential point is that every Frenchman is compelled to subject himself at an early age to the authority of many masters and that he is taught to obey, perhaps the only good that he can derive from conscription. As a result we find the Frenchman far more ready in after life to accept authority, when he knows it to be intelligently exercised, and less likely to delude himself with fine phrases revolving round the word "Freedom."

He submits as readily to irksome laws as to stringent paternal authority, because he knows that public order must be maintained. The administrative machine, which the country has inherited from the First Empire, has accustomed citizens to authority, and they bend willingly before its bureaucratic rule. Thus they submit to restrictions on the right of meeting which were not contemplated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The open-air assemblies in this country are ever a subject for astonishment to the French; the Hyde Park orator would not for a moment be tolerated and

Trafalgar Square demonstrations would immediately be suppressed. Even marches through the city streets are discouraged and impeded: the French law does not recognise the right of the people to discuss their affairs in the open air. It also assumes the right to use the search warrant on suspicion, a thing utterly alien to a people who hold the view that a man's house is his castle; this is a survival of past absolutism and its retention is probably justified by the changes that have taken place in political *régimes*. The time will come, in a few decades, when the Republic will have been so long established that it will be possible to allow the people a liberty which they will not misuse.

We must not conclude from all this that the French are slaves both at home and abroad, for nothing is less true. The *régime* is liberal, but it perpetually keeps in mind the fact that freedom is not the right to do what you please, but the right to do what you please provided you injure no man. In this country we have often turned liberty into licence, the most perfect contrast to ourselves being not France but Germany; as a result our social conditions, the status of labour, housing etc., are considerably below the standards of races that are not less liberty loving, but willing to limit the exercise of a privilege which may injure the community and weaken the State.

Discipline does not seem harsh in France, so accustomed are the people to restrictions, of the existence of which they are actually oblivious; they do not wish to break away and willingly live ordered and sober lives. As a race they are sedate, particularly the ubiquitous *bourgeois* element. There is an impression

abroad that the French are superficial and frivolous; that is untrue, but this false impression is accounted for when we consider how naturally cheerful they are. Apart from some of the younger *Intellectuels* whom despair of ever righting social evils has driven into pessimism, the French are kindly and gay under circumstances that would have tried Mark Tapley. They have an extraordinary facility for placing themselves beyond the reach of everyday annoyance and for living for the day, "living" in the fullest sense. Thus the crowded streets in French cities, the immense gatherings of merrymakers in places of amusement, lead the casual observer to believe that the race has elevated the pursuit of pleasure to an exclusive occupation.

The most prevalent misconception is the idea that there is no home life in France; it has been quite seriously suggested to me that the *café* and the *restaurant* see more of the average Frenchman than does his home. One might as well argue that the Englishman of the lower classes lives in the public house because the latter is always full. The truth of the matter is that, though French *cafés* are altogether cleaner and pleasanter places than their equivalent (if there be one) in Great Britain, the French do not haunt them to the extent of indulging in intemperance. There are no parks to speak of in French cities, so that the citizen and his family naturally resort to open-air *cafés;* the result upon their health is comparable with the effects of open spaces, and the inborn frugality of the race sternly limits their expenditure on stimulants; indeed more non-intoxicants are sold than alcoholic drinks: the French have no great liking for the latter and consider drunkenness as the worst of all vices. We are

inclined to look upon it with indulgence, but the French view it with horror ; in other directions their standards are lower, but for the drunkard they make no allowances. So stringent are their views on the subject that the law provides exemplary penalties for the chronic drunkard ; after a certain number of convictions he is debarred from serving as a juror and from being elected to any public office ; he may even be disfranchised, an extreme form of punishment in a country where manhood suffrage is a sacred principle of government.

Restaurant dining can be dismissed more summarily. Not only does the *bourgeois* enjoy his home, but he strongly objects to the expenditure entailed by dining out ; the impression that restaurant dining is a feature of French life is amusing, and I cannot say too often that no comparison can be instituted between the steady and rather dull French *bourgeois* and our pleasure-loving middle class. Indeed, if we compare the citizens of Paris and of London, it is not unlikely that the latter indulge far more, in proportion, in dining away from home. I do not contend that home life is decaying in this country, but it must not be set up as immeasurably more complete than in France, for it is not impossible that the contrary is actually the case.

Apart from moral tendencies and national customs, the French race has intellectual peculiarities that are well worth noting. Some are unknown to us, some unrecognised and many misunderstood. This cannot be said of the quality of logic, with which the French are usually credited in this country ; I do not know the origin of our impression, but I cannot say that experience confirms it. The French are no more logical or illogical than we are ; they number hard-

headed business men and intelligent diplomats, but other races are not without such men. As regards the race, I should feel more inclined to say that it is not logical, in the philosophical sense; the French are impulsive, a natural result of hotheadedness, and often forget the rule in the application. The impression may have arisen from the quality of their literature, which is usually clear and well knit, but that is not a matter of logic, but of clarity and terseness. It is in this direction that the French race and the French language shine; it is true that, in many cases, the British express their thoughts in fewer words, particularly by means of Saxon sayings which owe their origin to a restricted vocabulary, but they do not infuse into their speech the colour that abounds in French. Such expressions as *le feu sacré*, to express by "sacred fire" an uncontrollable bent, *faire balle*, to give by comparison with a bullet the impression of the crushing effect of a word or a deed, are interesting and shed some light on the national outlook; it would be easy to make out a list of sayings graceful or pungent, sweeping or precise, but I must resist the temptation and quote only one, *l'esprit de l'escalier*, "the wit of the stairs," because, in its suggestion of the good thing that might have been said and is thought of too late, we find concentrated the graces of irony and elegance that have placed French literature on so high a pinnacle.

A graceful language may proceed from a vigorous people; yet the impression has been created that the French are as airy as their phrases. So much has been said elsewhere, directly and indirectly, on the subject that it appears unnecessary to return to it; it is enough to ask the reader to decide whether this

solid and earnest people, who love liberty so well, show any signs of lightness except in externals. How, indeed, the charge of frivolity can be sustained by those who admit that the French are quixotic is remarkable. Quixotic they most assuredly are and, in the whole course of their history, they have wasted no opportunity of demonstrating the fact. They are a sentimental people, though they may not in this respect compare with the British and the Germans, but, above all, their passion for liberty has ever enlisted them on the side of the oppressed. Indeed, they have been practically the only rivals of Great Britain in the work of civilisation and in that of protecting the weak. The two great nations of the West stand out proudly from among the bandit European states, concerned ever with their own interests, ruthless, pitiless.

The sympathy of France has often been given to the same objects as has that of Great Britain, for both gloried in citizens fighting for the oppressed Greek, for the oppressed Italian; the two nations have joined hands to protect Morocco and have placed themselves at the head of those who demand freedom for Macedonia and mercy for the Congo. Therefore, let it be understood that it is in no spirit of carping criticism that I prefer the claim of France to a share in the great enterprises of this world that could yield no profit, but only glory. The French, like the British, have always supported the weak against the strong, and in that fact we find the true bond of union between the two peoples.

It may seem a contradiction, but the quixotic French race does not contain many Don Quixotes. Solid and rather dull, thrifty and somewhat avaricious, the Frenchman, in every-day life, sinks his sentiment and transforms

the potential Knight de la Mancha into a respectable Sancho. His capacity and liking for hard work are alike amazing and extend to every walk of life. From childhood upwards he is overworked, and thrives under the burden; we have already seen that long hours and short holidays are willingly accepted by the people for their children. As a natural result, the nation being educated in hard work, faces with equanimity the prospect of long hours in after life. The British workman at his best is clearly superior to the Frenchman, whose output he easily exceeds whilst maintaining a higher average of quality; for that reason first-class British artisans are imported in numbers. The ordinary type of labourer is, however, more efficient in France; his output is larger, and his wage lower. The natural capacity of the French for hard work has been trained to such a pitch that they look upon it as normal and acceptable.

The law fixes 9½ hours[1] as the legal working day in factories, a high limit when we remember how strong is in France the Socialist party. Moreover, the average is counted over six days, for the half-day has not yet entered into national customs. Indeed, up to four or five years ago, no child had more than one half-holiday in every week, nor could most workers hope for as much as one a month. The six-day week was the rule, and the seven-day week frequent; workmen, employees, and shopkeepers averaged 6½ days' work per week. Of late years, hours have decreased; banks and the leading stores have to a small extent introduced early closing, and the Sunday Rest Law is being put into practice. Yet the average remains high, and I do not think it

[1] This will be reduced to 9 hours at the end of the current year, to 8½ in 1910, and to 8 hours in 1912.

ERRATUM.

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The hours of labour are not limited except in cases where men, women and children are employed in the same workshop; the hours of labour for men are then fixed at ten hours; miners are actually working $8\frac{1}{2}$ hours, and their hours will be brought down to 8 hours in June, 1909; most government employees work 8 to 9 hours.

rash to assert that a full six-day week is still the French average. The week-end is practically unknown even to the wealthier business men, whose apparent ideal is to come to their office early and to leave it late. I need not enlarge upon this subject, for it forms every year the subject of correspondence in the newspapers during the summer months; it is enough to indicate that the French custom differs from ours in this as in many other respects.

Here must end this survey of French customs, manners, and institutions. The completion of the task reveals the sad fact that, although much has been said, yet far more has been left unnoticed, and that the work of discrimination has resulted in the omission of much interesting matter. Such information is, however, easily found in other books, whereas my aim has been rather to correct false impressions and to give a true picture, if a rough one, of the actual state of things in France.

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France in the Twentieth Century.

By the Author of "ENGINES OF SOCIAL PROGRESS," **W. L. GEORGE.** **6s.** net.

Mr. George, whose previous work was extremely well received, has undertaken a somewhat ambitious task, but the appearance of a book on modern France is most timely, and, even if less skilfully treated, a work of the kind would attract wide attention. "France in the Twentieth Century," however, is certain to prove much more than a book of the passing hour, for not only is it intelligently written, but it shows a thorough grasp of the subject. Every chapter is of value, and the fact that the author was educated in France, and actually served his time in the French Army, gives additional interest to a handsome volume.

Goethe's "Faust" Translated in Verse. SIR GEORGE BUCHANAN, C.B., K.C.V.O.

Post 8vo, cloth, gilt, **2s. 6d.** net. Leather, **3s. 6d.** net.

The Diplomatic Service, exacting though its duties may be, gives opportunities of a study of European literature that rarely falls to others. Though there have been other translations of "Faust" in prose or verse, Sir George Buchanan's rendering shows fine insight, and such an appreciation of the German poet's ideas as few scholars evince. Only the first part of Goethe's masterpiece is translated, the second part being described in a note by the author.

Fiction.

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The Lord of Latimer Street. By Jane Wardle. Author of "The Artistic Temperament." 6s.

In the early months of last year Miss Wardle's first book made a sensation both in the literary circles and with the general public, it being a matter of common wonder how such a young lady, as she was understood to be, could have such a grasp of the artistic, commercial, and suburban worlds. That Miss Wardle would be heard of again was prophesied by more than one critic, and there seems every prospect of "The Lord of Latimer Street" going far to substantiate her claim to recognition as a writer of marked originality. As may be conjectured from the title, Miss Wardle's new book is concerned with characters of more lofty station than was the type depicted in "The Artistic Temperament." The same whimsical humour, however, pervades the story, which, it is to be hoped, is sufficiently characteristic of the author to allay any suspicion on the part of critics as to a concealment of identity.

The Meddler. By H. de Vere Stacpoole and W. A. Bryce. With 8 illustrations and frontispiece. 6s.

Those who affect the lighter side of literature have never been in such need of thoroughly amusing books as during the last year or two, and with the host of requests for "something with a laugh on every page," the bookseller has been powerless to comply. The publication of "The Meddler" is at least one step in the right direction; it is full of fun of the lightest, healthiest sort. The artist, too, has entered thoroughly into the spirit of a book which goes with a merry swing from start to finish.

Furze the Cruel. By John Trevena. Author of "Arminel of the West," etc. Third Impression. 6s.

Mr. John Trevena's rise to a high position among West Country novelists has been rapid indeed. If "A Pixy in Petticoats" revealed a talent for romance, combined with the nicest vein of rustic humour, "Arminel of the West" proved that the author was fully equal to the task of writing a really powerful novel. In his latest work he has advanced still farther, for there has been no more artistic representation of the men and women, far from simple in many respects, yet in others primitive to a degree, who dwell in the heart of Devon. When a district possesses chroniclers like Mr. Trevena, it is easy to explain why holiday makers are year by year evincing a disposition to leave the beaten tracks in their rambles.

The Turn of the Balance. By Brand Whitlock. 6s.

Though it is true that many novels that have had a huge vogue in America meet with a comparatively frigid reception on this side of the Atlantic, it is equally true that when once an American book hits the British taste, the impression it leaves is far more lasting than that of the average run of publications. "The Turn of the Balance" is the work of a realist who, perhaps inspired originally by the arch-realist, Mr. Howett, has attained a realism that places him in a position entirely his own. "'The Turn of the Balance,'" says Mr. Upton Sinclair, author of "The Jungle," "is an extraordinary piece of work. It is as true as life itself, and yet irresistible in its grip upon the reader. I know nothing with which to compare it, except Tolstoy's 'Resurrection.'"

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The Rainy Day. Tales from the Great City. By the Author of "A London Girl," etc. Second impression. 3s. 6d.

The anonymous author of Tales from the Great City has already attained to high repute by means of "A London Girl" and "Closed Doors," in both of which his unrelenting pen exposed the depths of misery that underlie the so-called "Life of Pleasure." In his latest work, "The Rainy Day," the author turns his attention to the middle-class suburb as it existed in the eighties of last century, before the local idea was completely absorbed by the spirit of metropolitanism. To the novel reader who demands a good story, and to the student of social phenomena, "The Rainy Day" can be recommended with equal confidence.

The Glen o' Weeping. By Marjorie Bowen. Fourth impression. 6s.

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"The only thing to be said about 'The Viper of Milan' and its brilliantly successful successor, 'The Glen o' Weeping,' is that they carry one completely away. There is in this second novel every fine quality of its predecessor. It is an entire and complete success."—Morning Leader.

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"Arminel reminds one of that former pixy in her teasing, affectionate, plaguey ways."—DAILY MAIL.

"I have read with great delight the second volume of the author of 'A Pixy in Petticoats,' whose name, now divulged, is John Trevena. To be fresh and unconventional, and yet to have Devonshire as your *locale*, is a notable feat, and in 'Arminel of the West' Mr. Trevena does this thing."—BYSTANDER.

"Mr. Trevena has given us a strong piece of work, marked at once by observation and fancy."—DAILY TELEGRAPH.

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In Life's Byways. C. S. BRADFORD. **3s. 6d.**

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Gift Books.

Sarah the Valiant. By THEODORA WILSON WILSON. Author of "The Magic Jujubes," "A Navvy from King's," etc. With 8 illustrations. **3s. 6d.**

The Truant Five. By RAYMOND JACBERNS. Author of "The New Pupil," etc. With 6 illustrations. **3s. 6d.**

There is no present that is more acceptable to a girl than a nice book; yet how difficult it is to find exactly the right thing! There are, of course, dozens of books published every autumn that are harmless enough, and will, very possibly, afford a certain amount of pleasure for the moment to the average young lady—but the perfect book for girls must have so many qualities, mostly negative, no doubt, but some positive as well. The perfect girl's book should not contain any mention of "things" (as Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer would say). Well, there are plenty that do not, but where such books fall short of perfection is that "grown-ups" find them dreadfully tedious to read aloud in the family circle. That is what is wanted; a book that will interest and amuse everybody; if it comes up to that requirement it is certain to interest and amuse girls.

Here are two books that everybody will like: "Sarah the Valiant," by Theodora Wilson Wilson, is full of entertainment; the characters all live, and though pathos is never obtruded, the story is full of the tenderness of which the author has already shown herself to be possessed in "The Magic Jujubes." Raymond Jacberns's "The Truant Five" is equally certain to please. So graphically are the young people's wanderings described, that the staidest of aunts must feel the vagabond spirit thrill within her, though the common-sense denouement of the story can be relied on as an infallible moral antidote. Both books are beautifully illustrated, and the titles are worth remembering: "Sarah the Valiant" and "The Truant Five."

General Literature.

The Book of Living Poets. Edited by WALTER JERROLD. Crown 8vo. **7s. 6d.** net.

It has been the fashion in literary circles of late to aver that modern poetry suffers neglect at the hand of the publisher. That contemporary verse is not altogether unpatronised, however. Mr. Alston Rivers has already proved by the series of little volumes, all the work of living authors, that he has issued recently with success. That effort is now being followed up by a charming volume of upwards of 400 pages, beautifully bound and printed, entitled, "The Book of Living Poets." Every contemporary poet of distinction, from whose pen verse has been recently published, is represented; to name only a few, Swinburne, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and Alfred Noyes.

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